

ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Val C. Ballestrem for the Master of Arts in History presented February 11, 2009.

Title: “In the Shadow of a Concrete Forest”: Transportation Politics in Portland, Oregon, and the Revolt Against the Mount Hood Freeway, 1955 – 1976

In 1955, The Oregon State Highway Department helped usher in the freeway-building era in Portland by publishing its plan for 14 modern freeways designed to crisscross the city. A major component of that report was the Mount Hood Freeway, a route designed to pass through southeast Portland, connecting the city to its expanding eastern suburbs. Other freeway routes in the Portland area were given precedence over the Mount Hood Freeway and by 1969, when the route obtained federal interstate status, urban freeways across the nation had become highly controversial. Over the next seven years a struggle ensued pitting those who brought new perspectives in urban transportation planning to Portland against those who felt that accommodating the ever-increasing use of the automobile was the answer to the city’s traffic problems.

The growing opposition to the Mount Hood Freeway in the early 1970s included southeast Portland residents, but it also had the support of elected officials, at the city, county and ultimately the state level. Federal environmental legislation requiring an environmental impact study encouraged freeway opponents and they

were bolstered when, in 1973, the Federal Highway Administration agreed to allow cities in the midst of freeway revolts to trade-in portions of their interstate funding for money that could be used on other transportation projects including mass transit.

While citizen activists helped delay the freeway, the actions of Portland mayor Neil Goldschmidt, Multnomah county commissioners Donald Clark and Mel Gordon, and Governor Robert Straub, led to the complete cancellation of the Mount Hood Freeway's construction. In 1976, Governor Straub received the approval of his trade-in request and over the next fifteen years, money once earmarked for construction of the Mount Hood Freeway was used in numerous other Portland-area transportation projects, including the area's first light rail line. The Mount Hood Freeway was never constructed, but the impact of its planning is still felt in Portland today.

“IN THE SHADOW OF A CONCRETE FOREST”:
TRANSPORTATION POLITICS IN PORTLAND, OREGON,
AND THE REVOLT AGAINST THE MOUNT HOOD FREEWAY,
1955-1976

by
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For Holli, thank you for your patience and support

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INTRODUCTION

Downtown Portland, Oregon lies nestled between tree-studded hills to the west and the Willamette River to the east. The result is a limited number of access points to outlying areas, including the city's populous east side. In the freeway building era of the mid-twentieth century, access into and around downtown Portland was an oft-discussed topic by local, state, and even federal government officials. To address the needs of the growing population immersed in automobile culture, a number of modern roadways were created and existing roadways upgraded. Recognizing the potential for federal road building funds, the Oregon State Highway Department prepared a massive freeway plan for the Portland metropolitan area just prior to the implementation of Eisenhower's 1956 highway act. A few of the freeways were constructed, but many were not. Over time residents began to recognize the environmental and social impacts of such large roadways and animosity ensued. Among the once-planned yet never constructed Portland area freeways, one holds a prominent role in Portland history —the Mount Hood Freeway.

By the mid-1950s, freeways were generally seen as important and necessary components to a city's network of roadways. In an age focused on progress and urban renewal, the concept of removing thousands of automobiles from area surface streets and placing them on limited access roadways was seen as a fitting approach. In Portland, as in other major U.S. cities, traffic was heavily congested and freeways seemed to offer relief for this problem. The first highways in the Portland area were met with enthusiasm, but soon local residents began to express concern about their

impacts. Changes in attitudes toward freeways included concern for the natural environment, the loss of affordable housing, and a revival of interest in mass transit. By the early 1960s, opposition to urban freeways in Portland was beginning to increase, but anti-freeway attitudes in Portland were not that unusual. Similar “freeway revolts” occurred nearly simultaneously in major cities across the United States, beginning with San Francisco and spreading to Washington D.C., Baltimore, Miami, and New Orleans.

By the mid-1960s, opposition to Portland area freeways was becoming increasingly louder, but opponents held little power within their local or state governments. These officials still firmly believed that freeways were the cure to traffic congestion and helped eliminate blighted neighborhoods. At the time mass transit was viewed as outdated and not a viable alternative to the automobile. The Mount Hood Freeway story provides the backdrop to the changes in attitudes toward urban transportation that occurred in Portland from the time the first freeways were constructed to the revival of mass transit that occurred in the wake of this major freeway controversy.

The primary focus of this thesis is to explore the years from 1955, when the Mount Hood Freeway was first proposed by the Oregon State Highway Department, to 1976, when the freeway was officially withdrawn from the interstate system by the Federal Highway Administration and the money earmarked for alternative transportation uses. This period marks the heyday of freeway building in Portland, beginning with the highway department’s 1955 freeway report, which expedited

development of the Portland area interstate network once the Interstate Highway Act of 1956 was enacted. Although construction on other area freeways would be completed after 1976, this date marks the Mount Hood Freeway's official demise, effectively bringing an end of the interstate building era in Portland.

The order in which Portland's freeways were constructed is also an important component of the Mount Hood Freeway story. Early freeways, such as the Banfield completed in 1958, were met with little or no resistance. Over time resistance increased, became better organized, and eventually received support from elected officials. Mere organized opposition to freeways did not in itself bring about a halt to their construction. In order for anti-freeway efforts to succeed, not only did they require the support of elected officials at nearly every level of government, but they also needed changes in federal transportation and environmental policy. Because the Mount Hood Freeway entered its development phase at the same time public officials began to consider alternatives to urban freeway construction and revise policy accordingly, opponents were able to prevent the route from ever being constructed.

It should not be construed that the concept of a Mount Hood Freeway was created in 1955 without any prior point of reference. Transportation plans dating back to 1912 repeatedly called for a network of new roadways all over Portland as a means of addressing the impact of the automobile and the transportation needs of residents throughout the city.¹ By the 1940s, the City of Portland was considering full-scale changes to the existing network of roadways, bringing famed New York planner

¹ Marshall N. Dana, *The Greater Portland Plan of Edward H. Bennett* (Portland: Wells & Co., 1912), 9.

Robert Moses to town. In 1943, Moses put his stamp on the future of road building in the city, calling for the development of a loop of “thruways” around Portland’s city center.² The thruway concept advocated by Moses was a smaller scale version of the interstate loop that was ultimately built around Portland’s city center during the 1950s-1960s. Moses can be credited with bringing the concept of limited access freeways to Portland, but his 1943 plans did not include a vast network of freeway routes like those proposed by the Oregon State Highway Department in 1955.

In order to reflect the evolution of attitudes toward freeways that occurred during the period in question, the chapters of this thesis are organized chronologically rather than in a thematic manner. In the course of two decades, the Mount Hood Freeway evolved from lines on a map of proposed freeway projects to a highly controversial and all but constructed segment of the federal interstate highway system and finally to a project abandoned altogether in the pursuit of a new direction in urban transportation planning. The story of the Mount Hood Freeway has not been previously written about in great detail. With the enormous amount of source material available on the subject, the author feels it is important to maintain a chronological order of events as a means of providing future researchers with a basic understanding of the major developments related to the Mount Hood Freeway that occurred in the period from 1955 to 1976. By maintaining this order it will show that as the freeway came closer to construction, so did the forces that brought about its demise come into being.

² Robert Moses, *Portland Improvement* (New York: Madigan-Hyland, 1943), 30.

The primary sources used for this thesis include the various freeway reports and studies of which the Mount Hood Freeway was the primary concern. This includes reports created by the Oregon State Highway Department, the Portland Planning Commission, and freeway related studies completed by other entities on their behalf. In addition to these reports, a number of archival collections were researched. Of primary importance is the Neil Goldschmidt collection of the Oregon State Archives. This collection, of which much has been digitized and published on their website, includes a significant number of documents from Goldschmidt's time as city commissioner (1971-72) and then mayor of Portland (1973-79). Other collections consulted in the development of this thesis include the Donald E. Clark and Melvin L. Gordon collections located at the Oregon Historical Society. The context and details of the Mount Hood Freeway story are perhaps best brought to light through various newspaper articles, from both the *Oregonian* and the *Oregon Journal*, that address the freeway issue, dating to the mid-1950s.

No detailed and critical examination of the Mount Hood Freeway story has yet been published. Although the story has been mentioned briefly in scholarly works completed since the late 1970s, most accounts of the freeway are found in local media sources. Given the more than 30 years since the freeway was cancelled and the continued portrayal of this story by Portland area media outlets as one of the most important events in the city over the past several decades, the subject deserves further analysis.³ In his *Portland: Planning, Politics, and Growth in a Twentieth Century*

³ Bob Young, "Highway to Hell," *Willamette Week*, March 9, 2005.

City, published in 1983, Carl Abbott provided the first scholarly account of the Mount Hood Freeway story.⁴ Although not an in-depth study of the freeway or the battle over its construction, Abbott's work continues to provide the context for the Mount Hood Freeway story and several important and related urban planning developments that occurred in Portland during the twentieth century. Abbott again touched on the Mount Hood Freeway in 2001, with the publication of *Greater Portland: Urban Life and Landscape in the Pacific Northwest*, in which he describes the cancellation of the freeway as "Portland's own contribution to the freeway revolt that was sweeping American cities."⁵

The Mount Hood Freeway has also been mentioned in a handful of scholarly journal articles over the past decade. In only one instance however, has there been much emphasis placed on the battle over the freeway. In a piece on the background of Portland's light rail system, Gregory L. Thompson of Florida State University provides context to his research by briefly discussing the Mount Hood Freeway and its cancellation. Thompson is correct in his argument that Portland's "power brokers" reflected the values shared at the neighborhood level, but his focus on the history of light rail in Portland gives little attention to specific details surrounding the actual battle over the Mount Hood Freeway, namely that the controversy was certainly not a one-sided affair.⁶ Besides Thompson's effort, there has been little more than brief

⁴ Carl Abbott, *Portland: Planning, Politics, and Growth in a Twentieth-Century City* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 255-257.

⁵ Carl Abbott, *Greater Portland: Urban Life and Landscape in the Pacific Northwest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 150.

⁶ Gregory L. Thompson, "Taming the Neighborhood Revolution: Planning, Power Brokers, and the Birth of Neotraditionalism in Portland, Oregon," *Journal of Planning History* 6, no. 3 (2007), 219.

mentions of the Mount Hood Freeway in other scholarly journals. There have been several articles about freeway revolts in other U.S. cities, revolts that in many ways reflect similar events in Portland during the 1960s-1970s. In his piece on the freeway revolts in San Francisco, William Issel asserts that opposition to freeways was based in environmentalism.⁷ Issel's argument can similarly be applied to the anti-freeway movement in Portland, except that it occurred several years after San Francisco's freeway revolt, which began in the late 1950s.

Scholars Raymond A. Mohl and Zachary M. Schrag have both written and collaborated on the subject of freeway revolts in several major U.S. cities. Mohl's work has shown how cities like Baltimore and Miami addressed the urban freeway issue in the 1960s – 1970s. Schrag, on the other hand, has given specific attention to freeway construction in the Washington D.C. area and developments at the federal level that directly addressed local freeway issues during the same time period as that covered by Mohl. Although the geographic focus of Schrag and Mohl has been predominately the eastern United States, one of their central arguments can be applied to the Mount Hood Freeway story. Indeed, anti-freeway activists could not have been successful in their efforts to halt freeway construction had they not been supported by federal legislation and the actions of local elected officials.⁸ The central argument put forth in this thesis is that the halting of the Mount Hood Freeway resulted directly

⁷ William Issel, "Land Values, Human Values, and the Preservation of the City's Treasured Appearance": Environmentalism, Politics, and the San Francisco Freeway Revolt," *Pacific Historical Review* 68, No. 4 (1999), 616.

⁸ Raymond A. Mohl, "Stop the Road: Freeway Revolts in American Cities," *Journal of Urban History* 30, no. 5 (2004): 676. Zachary M. Schrag, "The Freeway Fight in Washington D.C.: The Three Sisters Bridge in Three Administrations," *Journal of Urban History* 30, no. 5 (2004): 668-669.

from the wielding of power by those whom Schrag refers to as “insiders” and Thompson calls “power brokers.” Elected officials at the city, county and state levels of government in Oregon, worked together to halt the Mount Hood Freeway and take transportation planning in Portland in a new direction.

The Mount Hood Freeway was ultimately cancelled, but it should not be assumed that this un-built road had no impact on those parts of the city through which it would have traveled. For two decades, residents living in the proposed freeway’s path witnessed significant changes to their neighborhoods. At first many property owners neglected their investments, assuming that the freeway was certain to be constructed and seeing no reason to rehabilitate aging neighborhoods. Later, the highway department prepared for a road that most assumed would be constructed. They cleared land, tearing down or moving hundreds of homes and other buildings in the process. Once the freeway was canceled, many of these areas were re-developed and money once targeted for the Mount Hood freeway was spread around the Portland area for multiple transportation projects. In this way, the city of Portland remains to this day in the shadow of (or perhaps haunted by) a freeway that was never constructed.

So what is a freeway? Before any discussion of the Mount Hood Freeway can begin, it is important to define a freeway and other major roadways. The term “highway” refers to full-access, multiple-lane roadways, designed to carry heavy traffic loads, but typically containing traffic signals, the ability to turn left, and at-grade cross traffic. The rise in automobile usage in the 1910s and the ensuing traffic

congestion in city business districts, led to the development of highways as a means of moving recreational traffic, commuters and commercial vehicles.⁹

An ever growing amount of motor vehicle traffic meant that within a few decades many of the first highways had become heavily congested. As a result, the aging roadways were either widened or new roads were constructed in the form of “expressways,” which differ from a standard highway in that they have fewer crossings or crossings that are not at grade, along with fewer traffic signals and a limited number of access points. The modern “freeway” evolved from the expressway concept and the notion that in order to handle large amounts of traffic, interruptions needed to be eliminated. The definition used in this thesis reflects the definition first outlined by the Oregon State Highway Department in their 1955 freeway report for Portland. A freeway is a roadway in which access is completely controlled, typically through grade separated crossings. There is no parking, there are no traffic signals, and left turns are not allowed.¹⁰ Unlike a turnpike, another limited access roadway popular in the U.S. since the nineteenth century, the freeway is “free” because there is no toll for its use.

Where would the Mount Hood Freeway have been located? In general the freeway would have followed a five-mile path from the Willamette River at Portland, eastward through the center of the southeast portion of the city to approximately 122nd Avenue (Figure 1). A possible extension of the freeway would have continued another

⁹ Jeffrey Brown, “A Tale of Two Visions: Harland Bartholomew, Robert Moses, and the Development of the American Freeway,” *Journal of Planning History*, 4, no. 1 (2005), 6.

¹⁰ Oregon State Highway Department, Traffic Engineering Division Planning Survey Section, *Freeway and Express System, Portland Metropolitan Area, 1955* (Salem, OR: Oregon State Highway Department, 1955), 25.

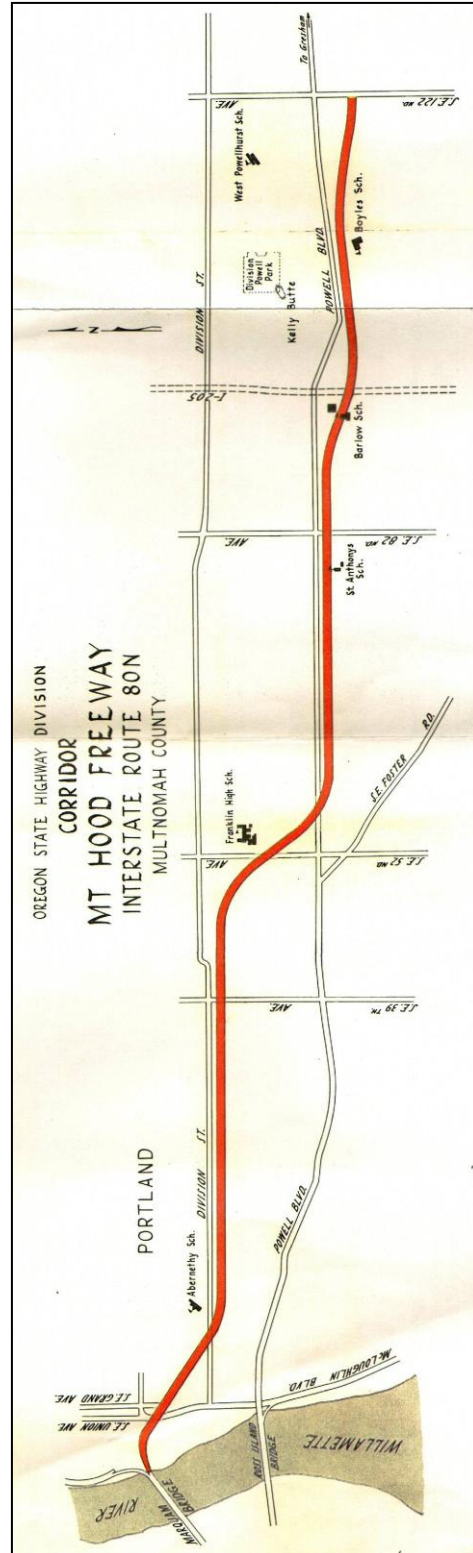


Figure 1. Mount Hood Freeway Corridor Map
Oregon State Highway Division, 1972.

several miles to the city of Gresham. At the time the freeway was proposed, southeast Portland contained 28 percent of all housing units in the city and 30 percent of the city's population.¹¹ Much of the route along which the Mount Hood Freeway would have passed was filled with older working and middle-class homes and residents who had been in their homes for extended periods of time.

A detailed examination of the freeway route shows that it would have run parallel and adjacent to Division Street, from the Willamette River crossing to 50th Avenue, where it would then turn gradually southward across Powell Boulevard and then eastward again, this time parallel and adjacent to that major east side thoroughfare. The Division-Powell route would have first passed through and over an industrial section of Portland's east side before cutting through established residential neighborhoods. Along the entire route were several churches like St. Mark's Lutheran at SE 54th Avenue and Powell Boulevard that would have lost at least a significant portion of its property and whose leadership spoke out in opposition to the Freeway. At least one school would have also been completely lost. Barlow Grade School on SE 92nd Avenue was directly in the proposed path of the Mount Hood Freeway. Numerous commercial properties along both Division and Powell would also have been lost as the edges of the freeway would have been developed into buffer zones, with open space and possibly including bicycle lanes.

The potential physical footprint of the Mount Hood Freeway changed from the time the freeway was first proposed in 1955 to its cancellation in 1976. The Oregon

¹¹ Oregon State Highway Division, *I-80N Environmental Study Freeway Design Alternatives, Volume 1*, by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (Salem, OR: Oregon State Highway Division, 1973), III-11.

State Highway Department first proposed that the route be predominately a four-lane freeway but expanded those plans enormously by 1973, to include as many as eight lanes dedicated to automobile traffic, with two additional lanes for express buses or other forms of mass transit, and a new crossing over the Willamette River.¹² The potential length of the freeway also changed over time. In 1955, the freeway proposed by the highway department was 10 miles long and extended all the way to the outskirts of Gresham. By the time the Mount Hood Freeway was granted interstate status in 1969, the route had been significantly shortened to a freeway that was slightly more than half the length of the highway department's original proposal. Interstate funding was directed specifically at the length of roadway from the Willamette River to southeast 122nd Avenue, but until the Mount Hood Freeway was canceled there remained the possibility that one day the route would be extended the full distance initially proposed.

The summer of 1955 marks a key moment in the history of Portland area automobile transportation planning. At the time, a debate was ongoing in the U.S. Congress over a proposed Federal Interstate Highway Act supported by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. In Oregon, newspaper advertisements depicted cloverleaf highway interchanges amid rather pastoral landscapes proclaiming, "America's future progress depends upon better and safer highways...Let's Build Them Now!"¹³ At the same time, Robert Moses was declaring that if he had a billion dollars the first thing he

¹² *Freeway and Expressway System*, 60; *Freeway Design Alternatives, Volume I*, II-119.

¹³ *Oregon Journal*, June 21, 1955.

would do would be to buy rights-of-ways for needed highways and assist with relocation, while admitting “the time is near when it will be nearly impossible to drill through built up city centers.”¹⁴

Several prominent transportation issues were also under discussion in the Portland area during the summer of 1955. Real estate advertisements promoted suburban housing developments, negotiations were underway for a proposed new Portland Exposition Center, and a plan for new approaches to the Hawthorne Bridge as a means of relieving traffic congestion was also under consideration. Reflecting a national trend, the City Club of Portland, a highly regarded local civic organization, held a panel discussion focused upon expanding the number of parking spaces in downtown Portland as part of an effort to address parking issues in the city’s downtown core. This discussion included Portland traffic engineer Fred Fowler, who pointed out a noticeable drop in mass transit use into Portland’s city center. In the decade since the end of the Second World War the percentage of all travelers entering downtown via mass transit had shrunk from 52 to 24 percent.¹⁵ In an era dominated by automobile use, no one seemed to discuss why there had been such a dramatic decrease in mass transit ridership or how parking problems could potentially be abated through an expanded mass transit system.

Meanwhile, the Oregon State Highway Department had spent several years creating a plan for modern freeways in Portland. In late June 1955, the compilation of these plans was released in a report entitled *Freeway and Expressway System*,

¹⁴ “If I had a Billion Dollars,” *Oregon Journal*, June 5, 1955.

¹⁵ “Car Parking Ills Grow,” *Oregon Journal*, July 9, 1955.

Portland, Oregon. The report was hailed by Portland newspapers as a “breathtaking” approach that meant an “exciting prospect for the future” of the city.¹⁶ Still, with a battle raging in Washington D.C. over the Interstate Highway bill, it remained uncertain where funding would come from for these rather lofty transportation plans that included 14 new freeways, 14 highways, and 5 new bridges for the Portland metropolitan area.¹⁷ Regardless of the funding situation, the public was well primed to receive the freeway plans as a positive tool for progress. Little if any attention was given to the potential social, environmental, or economic impacts these massive freeway and highway projects would have on the citizens of Portland. With the release of *Freeway and Expressway System*, the public was made aware for the first time, of plans for a Mount Hood Freeway through southeast Portland (Figure 2).

With their plan for Portland area freeways in place in 1955, the Oregon State Highway Department was well prepared for the vast amount of federal funds that became available the following year when President Eisenhower signed into law the bill he deemed the greatest peacetime public works project in the history of the world.¹⁸ Eisenhower’s Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, offered 90 percent federal funding for the system of nationwide interstate highways. In Oregon as it was surely elsewhere, the race was now on for road projects to be designated as part of the new interstate system. In Portland, funding was first directed at a freeway loop around the

¹⁶ Editorial, *the Oregonian*, June 30, 1955.

¹⁷ Donald J. Sterling Jr., “Huge Routing Grid Planned for Portland,” *Oregon Journal*, June 28, 1955.

¹⁸ Jane Holtz Kay, *Asphalt Nation: How the Automobile Took Over America, and How We Can Take it Back* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1997), 231.



Figure 2. 1955 Freeway and Expressway Plan for the Portland Area.¹⁹

¹⁹ In this 1955 map from the *Oregonian*, the Laurelhurst Freeway route was adjacent to 39th Avenue. By the mid-1960s as planning for I-205 developed, the proposed route was moved further east, this time parallel to 52nd Avenue. “Plan Given for Traffic Future,” *the Oregonian*, June 29, 1955.

city center not too different from the plans created by Robert Moses in 1943, which itself had arisen from previous decades of expanded automobile focused planning.

The freeway loop around Portland's downtown core and extending both north and south of the city was created as two separate segments of the interstate system. The first, Interstate 5, was the eastern portion of the loop and consisted of several components outlined in *Freeway and Expressway System*, including a new bridge over the Willamette River south of the central city (now known as the Marquam Bridge).²⁰ The western portion of the freeway loop was deemed Interstate 405. This route was also outlined in *Freeway and Expressway System* as the Stadium Freeway, so-called for its proximity to Portland's major outdoor sports venue. I-405 was designed to link with Interstate 5 at both its northern and southern termini.²¹ At the northern end, another new Willamette River crossing was envisioned. Today known as the Fremont Bridge, the crossing was not completed until 1973, at the height of the freeway revolt in the Portland area. The Banfield Freeway, in northeast Portland, was also granted interstate status, designated Interstate 80 North even though it was not part of the freeway loop around the city center. The Banfield's status eventually played a key role in the Mount Hood Freeway story and the movement, beginning in the 1970s, to develop a light rail mass transit system in Portland.

By the end of the 1950s, development of the interstate system in Portland was in full swing. But at the height of the system's popularity — and only three years after the program had been adopted — opposition to the effects of freeway construction in

²⁰ *Freeway and Expressway System*, 70, 84.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

Portland began to emerge. In 1961, homeowners living in north Portland along a portion of I-5 known as the Minnesota Freeway, expressed concern over the loss of their neighborhoods. In this instance, any sort of formal opposition was quickly diminished after a group of residents met with state highway officials and realized there was little they could do.²² On Portland's west side, I-405 was opposed by residents who similarly wanted to preserve their neighborhoods and not have them bisected by an enormous concrete structure. As Lewis Mumford had predicted they would, people in Portland and in other major U.S. cities had begun to recognize the real impacts of massive road projects on cities and neighborhoods.²³

Freeway opposition was slow to emerge in the Portland area and over the next decade opponents held very little influence over the highway department or elected officials who favored freeways. Both I-5 and I-405 were constructed in the face of rising opposition, but it was not until another new segment of Portland's interstate network, I-205, entered the picture that the groundwork was laid for fervent opposition to the construction of freeways in southeast Portland. The development of I-205 was controversial and plays a pivotal role in the Mount Hood Freeway story.

²² Steven Reed Johnson, "Resisting the Mt. Hood, and Other Freeways" *Civic Life Portland Oregon*, <http://homepage.mac.com/stevenreedjohnson/mt.hoodfreeway.html> (accessed September 27, 2008).

²³ Lewis Mumford, *The Highway and the City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1963), 234.

CHAPTER TWO: INTERSTATE 205 AND THE MOUNT HOOD FREEWAY

In writing about the “freeway revolts” that occurred in the United States during the 1960s-1970s, historian Zachary Schrag has identified a common thread that ran through all of them. According to Schrag, successful freeway revolts during this period all shared the support of elected officials from the local level to the federal government. In Schrag’s view, “the halting of the freeways, and the passage of more flexible legislation, was a triumph of the insiders.”¹

Schrag’s thesis applies to the anti-freeway movement in Portland, Oregon, during the same period. The efforts of Portland’s citizenry in halting the Mount Hood Freeway during the 1970s is an integral component of modern Portland history, and citizen activists were certainly vital in keeping the freeway dialogue open and in delaying the freeway plan. But, as Schrag has argued about Washington D.C., events on a much larger stage enabled anti-freeway efforts in Portland to succeed. The lengthy struggle over the Mount Hood Freeway could not have been as successful had federal transportation legislation in the 1960s and 1970s remained focused on freeway and highway building as it had been since the end of World War II. Freeway opponents would have also lacked the clout necessary to stop the freeway’s construction had local insiders in the early 1970s not also turned against further freeway development in Portland.

¹ Zachary Schrag, “The Freeway Fight in Washington, D.C., The Three Sisters Bridge in Three Administrations,” *Journal of Urban History* 30 no. 5 (2004): 668-669.

By the early 1960s freeway planning and development efforts were well under way for I-5 and I-405. At this time, the Oregon State Highway Department turned its attention to another Portland freeway project outlined in their 1955 report *Freeway and Expressway System*. The route was a segment of the interstate system designated as I-205, originally planned to connect with I-5 at the western edge of the city of Lake Oswego, a community adjacent to Portland's southern border along the Willamette River. Had this planned interchange been constructed, it also would have connected to Oregon State Highway 217, taking drivers west and north toward the suburban cities of Tigard and Beaverton and then connecting to U.S. Highway 26 west of downtown Portland. The initial route for I-205 extended eastward from the proposed I-5 interchange through Lake Oswego, where it would cross the Willamette River to the city of Milwaukie, then go north, along an axis near 52nd Avenue through southeast Portland and into the northeastern part of the city. Because it would penetrate the Laurelhurst neighborhood, the route obtained its nickname, the Laurelhurst Freeway.

The highway department presented its plans for Interstate 205 to the public in December 1961, and was met with loud and immediate criticism. Opposition to I-205 came from east side neighborhoods near the proposed route, but the most outspoken anti-freeway sentiment came from Lake Oswego, at the route's western end. Lake Oswego residents and city officials began the first successful freeway revolt in the Portland area and dramatically altered the course of state freeway planning in the metropolitan area. The Lake Oswego School Board criticized state highway officials for planning routes that would disrupt the local school district, placing the high school

and middle school on one side of the freeway, while 90 percent of the schools' student population lived on the other side.² Although the highway department provided five possible routes for I-205 in and around Lake Oswego, ultimately there was little public support for any of them. Because the highway department did not purchase right-of-way for future road building projects in advance, they faced continued and protracted public struggles over freeway locations and construction. Consternation over freeway construction should have come as no surprise to state and local officials. Robert Moses, the man responsible for bringing the concept of the modern freeway to Portland, had predicted such battles when he visited the city in 1943.³

In 1962, federal legislators began to respond to the impacts of the automobile upon the urban landscape. No longer was their response narrowly focused on building more roads. Instead, they recognized the need for comprehensive transportation planning that included alternatives to the automobile, especially in metropolitan areas. With the passage of the 1962 Federal Aid Highway Act, cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants were required to develop continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation plans if they hoped to obtain funds for constructing local interstate segments. This legislation was intended to broaden the scope of urban transportation planning, but it would not go into effect until July 1965, which meant that freeway builders in Oregon retained a window of opportunity to push through I-205.

In Portland, the city's planning commission attempted to address future road building projects by developing and implementing a plan for neighborhood units.

² "Lake Oswego School Board Opposes Road Dividing District," *The Oregonian*, December 22, 1961.

³ Moses, *Portland Improvement*, 15.

These units were designed typically with a school and a park at the center, surrounded by residential areas, with major thoroughfares kept at the perimeter. With the goal of creating “an environment favorable to good home living,” the Planning Commission and the Portland School Board in 1958 had drafted a neighborhood plan for the city.⁴ One purpose was to avoid dividing Portland’s urban neighborhoods. In an era of declining mass transit use, plans for the Rose City called for new freeways to be constructed at the outer edges of these newly defined yet already existing neighborhoods, with the goal of keeping their centers intact for schools and parks.⁵ Nevertheless, by the early 1960s, freeway opponents, most often residents who would be directly affected by freeway construction, were arguing that freeways disrupted the character of neighborhoods, school boundaries, and access to local churches.⁶ As the highway department developed freeway plans, including the Mount Hood, Portland’s neighborhood plans became an integral component of route location discussions. By focusing on traffic accommodation rather than the residents of the state’s most populous city, implementation of neighborhood and freeway plans in Portland would have tacitly sacrificed one neighborhood in order to save another.

In addition to Portland’s local planning efforts, the highway department enlisted the Portland Vancouver Metropolitan Transportation Study (PVMTS) group. Originally formed in 1959, PVMTS helped direct local freeway development. At the helm was long-time Portland city commissioner William Bowes, a staunch proponent

⁴ Portland City Planning Commission, *Mt. Hood Freeway, Report to the Portland City Council* (Portland: Portland City Planning Commission, 1965), 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶ “Laurelhurst, Shattuck Citizens Weigh Proposed Freeway Effects,” *The Oregonian*, January 19, 1962.

of the Laurelhurst Freeway and freeways in general. Bowes had overseen the Portland Public Works Department since 1939, fancying himself a sort of Robert Moses-like figure.⁷ In fact, Bowes had played a role in bringing New York City's famous "power broker" and freeway builder to Portland in 1943.⁸ Citing local traffic studies dating back to 1949, which asserted the need for north-south traffic relief between 39th and 52nd Avenues, Bowes and the PVMTS recommended construction of the Laurelhurst - Lake Oswego route for I-205.

On April 2, 1963, the efforts of the PVMTS and the highway department were rejected by the Lake Oswego City Council. In unanimously resolving to oppose any freeway that would pass through its jurisdiction, the Lake Oswego City Council told the highway department and PVMTS to "forget about" building any freeway within a distance of several miles of their city.⁹ Because state law forbid the highway department from building roads through any jurisdiction that did not give approval, the PVMTS, under the watchful eye of Laurelhurst Freeway advocate William Bowes, had to select another connection to I-5 at its western end. One solution was the Mount Hood Freeway, which was also part of the highway department's 1955 freeway plan for the Portland metropolitan area and a route that had plenty of official support.

Lake Oswego's rejection of I-205 invigorated plans for the Mount Hood Freeway. Although the general route for a potential Mount Hood Freeway had been

⁷ William A. Bowes (1895-1969), was a Portland-area printer appointed to the Portland City Council to replace Ormond Bean in 1939. Bean had left the council to become Oregon's Public Utilities Commissioner. Jewel Beck Lansing, *Portland People, Politics, and Power, 1851-2001* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2005), 334.

⁸ Abbott, *Portland: Planning, Politics, and Growth*, 138.

⁹ *Oregon Journal*, April 3, 1963.

agreed on by Portland and Multnomah County officials as early as 1956, efforts at developing the Mount Hood route had been repeatedly stymied. Because the route was too close to Portland's city center, the Mount Hood Freeway did not meet federal standards for interstate bypass loop segments. As a general guideline, the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR), which oversaw implementation of the interstate network, wanted highway segments to avoid city centers, by looping around urban areas rather than through them. The BPR had refused to consider the Mount Hood option as a substitute for I-205, because I-205 had always been viewed primarily as a north-south outer bypass route.¹⁰ Using the Mount Hood route as part of I-205 would mean the BPR would have to change its policy of keeping outer bypass loops away from city centers. If the Mount Hood Freeway was to become part of the interstate system, it would have to be deemed one of the main-line interstate routes for Portland, rather than a portion of a bypass loop.¹¹ Portland's existing east-west interstate line was the heavily traveled Banfield Freeway, completed for the most part prior to the 1956 Interstate Highway Act. This route, also designated I-80 North, did not meet federal interstate standards because of its narrow lanes and sharp curves, which provided proponents of the Mount Hood route an opportunity to redouble their freeway advocacy efforts.

The challenge facing freeway advocates was how to get each of the government bodies involved to agree on a specific route for I-205. The highway department, the state highway commission, the City of Portland, Multnomah County, and PVMTS continually based their position on the results of engineering reports and

¹⁰ *I-80N Environmental Study Freeway Design Alternatives, Volume 1*, 13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

traffic studies, giving little attention to public opinion. In August 1964, a group of 12 citizen activists from the Portland Citizens Freeway Committee addressed the Oregon State Highway Commission in Salem, claiming to hold 7,000 signatures in opposition to not only the Laurelhurst Freeway portion of I-205, but also any freeway along the planned Mount Hood route.¹² In response, highway commission chair Glenn L. Jackson wryly observed that the only place in which the route could be located without objection would be in eastern Oregon.¹³ Jackson's comments suggest that he felt little sympathy for freeway opponents, but by this time the highway department, with the support of Multnomah County, had turned their attention to a new eastern alternative for the troubled I-205, known as the *Mount Hood – 96th* route. This new proposal by the highway department may have satisfied opponents of the Laurelhurst Freeway, but the recommendation that the Mount Hood Freeway, from the Marquam Bridge (over the Willamette River) to 96th Avenue, should serve as the western portion of I-205, was in itself another controversial plan. In October, the highway department presented their new recommendation to the state highway commission which accepted it for further review.

By accepting the Mount Hood Freeway as part of I-205, the state highway commission avoided further controversy with Lake Oswego, but the Mount Hood – 96th route had its own problems. It was peculiar that the highway commission chose this route because the Bureau of Public Roads had previously refused to accept the

¹² Oregon State Highway Commission, Meeting Minutes, 27 August 1964, Oregon State Archives, Salem, Oregon (hereafter referred to as OSHC Meeting Minutes).

¹³ Ibid.

Mount Hood Freeway as part of I-205, citing their desire to avoid Portland's city center. The highway commission's choice of the Mount Hood – 96th route was also odd because it went against the recommendation of the PVMTS' Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). In 1963, state highway engineers had asked PVMTS to help them determine the route for I-205.¹⁴ In November 1964, the TAC released its interim report recommending a Lake Oswego-Laurelhurst I-205 route.¹⁵ In December, the state highway commission held two I-205 location hearings in Portland, at which Bowes and TAC spokesman John Keely chastised the commission for ignoring their cooperative transportation planning efforts.¹⁶ Keely was particularly critical, suggesting that the commission "never intended" for I-205 to pass through Lake Oswego and calling the commission's actions "deceitful" and "cynical."¹⁷ Claiming a savings of nearly \$11 million dollars versus the cost of the Lake Oswego – Laurelhurst route and again repeating that Lake Oswego would not allow I-205 to pass through their borders, the highway department and the highway commission remained steadfastly in support of the Mount Hood – 96th route.¹⁸

The controversy between the highway commission, the City of Portland, and PVMTS points out the challenges of comprehensive transportation planning during this period. The City of Portland wanted the Mount Hood Freeway to relieve traffic

¹⁴ William Bowes to Portland City Council, "Let's Get Along With Good Freeway Planning," 7 April 1965, Box 2, Speeches and Writings, 1950-1968, MSS 1372, William A. Bowes papers, Oregon Historical Society (hereafter referred to as Bowes Papers).

¹⁵ Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Transportation Study, *I-205 Location Study Interim Report*, 1964, ix.

¹⁶ William Sanderson, "Protests Over East Side Freeway Route Began Early in Planning, Then Kept Coming," *The Oregonian*, December 6, 1964.

¹⁷ William Sanderson, "Charges of 'Deceit, Cynicism' Flung at Roads Commission," *The Oregonian*, December 12, 1964.

¹⁸ Sanderson, "Protests Over East Side Freeway Route."

congestion on the Banfield and the major east-west surface streets in southeast Portland, but they also felt the more pressing need was a north-south freeway segment approximately mid-way between the Willamette River and 82nd Avenue. The city and the PVMTS contended that the Laurelhurst Freeway could address this need, noting that since 1955, school and neighborhood planning in Portland had been predicated on this route being constructed.¹⁹ The TAC also contended that Mount Hood Freeway was not an immediate necessity.²⁰

By holding fast to state law, the highway commission could brush aside the first attempt at comprehensive transportation planning in the Portland area because the 1962 Federal Aid Highway Act, which had initiated the concept of cooperative regional transportation planning, did not require comprehensive planning as a condition for federal highway funding until 1965. Combining the Mount Hood Freeway with I-205 created the potential for 92 percent federal funding, an amount far greater than the Mount Hood could receive if it remained part of the state highway system. Nonetheless, the highway commission must have also known this choice would neither sufficiently address Portland's recognized traffic problems nor likely gain federal approval. Supporting the highway commission's choice, Multnomah County Commission chair Mike Gleason admitted their interest in the 96th Avenue route was based on the desire to connect Government Island on the Columbia River to the region's highways. Through all of the discussion, public opinion remained mixed and factored little into the positions taken by any of the participating agencies and

¹⁹ *I-205 Location Study Interim Report*, 1964, 26.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

public officials. Ultimately, both sides would be forced to consider another route altogether for I-205 but not before further transportation legislation at the federal level had laid the groundwork for support of mass transit.

Controversy in the Portland area over I-205 and the further development of the area's freeway network continued even as events at the federal level began to signal a shift away from the long standing emphasis on road building and toward a new recognition of the importance of mass transit. In July 1964, the Urban Mass Transit Act (UMTA), made it possible for local governments to qualify for funding of up to two-thirds of the cost for research and development on potential new mass transit systems.²¹ The UMTA affected local freeway planning efforts in Portland. By spring 1965, Portland officials asked that new freeways, in particular the Mount Hood project, include considerations for express bus lanes or lanes that could be dedicated to express rail. Although it would be more than twenty years before Portland's light rail system finally connected Portland's city center to the city of Gresham, urban planners were already acknowledging the potential for a return of rail mass transit, stating that "the Mount Hood route may well prove to be particularly advantageous for rapid transit."²²

Midway through the 1960s, the City of Portland, with the assistance of the Portland Planning Commission, continued to pursue building I-205. At the same time the city was also working to determine a favorable route for the Mount Hood Freeway, should its development move forward. In April 1965, the planning commission

²¹ *Freeway Design Alternatives, Volume 1*, 12.

²² *Mt. Hood Freeway, Report to the Portland City Council*, 3.

presented their study on the Mount Hood Freeway to the Portland City Council, which reiterated how vital they viewed the Laurelhurst Freeway portion of I-205 and argued adamantly that the Mount Hood Freeway should not be construed as a substitute for the Laurelhurst alignment of I-205.²³ The planning commission made another point clear, one that gained little attention at the time, that “no final decision should be made on a detailed design of the Mt. Hood Freeway until the mass transit study now underway by the Metropolitan Transportation Study [PVMTS] is completed and the influence of future mass transit service with reference to the Mt. Hood Freeway is determined.”²⁴ Only months after the Urban Mass Transit Authority had been created, transportation planners in Portland were already beginning to reconsider the merits of transportation options other than the automobile. To the Portland Planning Commission, the concept of express buses and rapid rail had emerged as potential solutions for relieving citywide traffic congestion, and the Mount Hood Freeway held the potential for including such mass transit options in its design.²⁵

In its April 1965 report, the Portland Planning Commission considered four potential routes for the Mount Hood Freeway. The highway department preferred a *Taggart-Woodward* route, about midway between Division Street and Powell Boulevard. The *Division-Powell* alignment, the Portland Planning Commission’s alternative to the highway department’s proposal, ran a few blocks north of the state’s selection and met the neighborhood unit goals sought by the city since 1958. Farther

²³ Ibid., d.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 3.

south, a third alternative, the *Creston* route was deemed undesirable by the planning commission because it would have meant the loss of both valuable industrial land and city-owned park land. A fourth route followed Johnson Creek Boulevard in far southeast Portland, but it was given the least amount of consideration because it would have overloaded McLoughlin Boulevard, a major connecting highway south from Portland. With relations between the state and the city of Portland strained over the ongoing I-205 controversy, the planning commission surprised no one by asserting itself and selecting their own alternative, the Division-Powell route as the best option for the Mount Hood Freeway, citing it as the best connection to a 52nd Avenue or Laurelhurst I-205 configuration.²⁶

The planning commission argued that the Division-Powell route for the Mount Hood Freeway held several advantages. The route followed neighborhood lines outlined in 1958 and thereby would purportedly limit adverse effects to neighborhoods. The planning commission also asserted that, if the Division-Powell route were constructed, traffic congestion on those two major thoroughfares would be reduced, and there would be little need to widen them in the future. In addition, the Division-Powell route had lower right-of-way acquisition costs than the Taggart-Woodward route and allowed for urban renewal in an area of so-called “unsound housing” south of Ladd’s Addition and west of 19th Avenue.²⁷ Finally, the planning commission’s asserted that, without the 52nd Avenue version of I-205, Portlanders would need to spend at least \$46 million on street widening projects for several major

²⁶ Ibid., 20.

²⁷ Ibid., C.

north-south streets. In concluding their report on their desired Mount Hood Freeway route, the planning commission reiterated its support of the 52nd Avenue version of I-205, stating that if the 96th Avenue route were chosen, there would be a continuation of the well-recognized traffic congestion problems on Portland's east side, damaging the city's tax base and overall livability.²⁸

For its part, the highway commission continued to assert that the Bureau of Public Roads would accept the Mount Hood – 96th Avenue route for I-205, if all other jurisdictions concurred.²⁹ Yet this argument was weak at best given the bureau's rejection of the Mount Hood Freeway as part of the bypass loop. William Bowes had publicly argued that the highway commission only wanted interstate highway status for the Mount Hood Freeway so they could obtain 92 percent funding rather than the 60 percent available for state highways.³⁰ According to Bowes, Multnomah County had changed its position on I-205, now favoring the 96th Avenue route, only because it would allow for a link to county-owned Government Island on the Columbia River, a proposed county park.³¹ Referring to *Freeway and Expressway System*, Bowes called the Laurelhurst – Lake Oswego route the “number one priority” for the highway network in Portland.³² To the frustration of highway commission officials, Portland's city council continued to support Bowes and in April 1965, voted four to one in favor of what they called the Tryon Creek – Laurelhurst route for I-205.³³ The lone

²⁸ Ibid., E.

²⁹ OSHC Meeting Minutes, 11 March 1965.

³⁰ Bowes, “Let's get Along With Good Freeway Planning.”

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ “Decision Deadlocks 2 Routes,” *The Oregonian*, April 8, 1965.

commissioner in opposition was Ormond Bean, who noted there would be “serious hardships” inflicted upon city residents regardless of the freeway’s location and who also believed it was the highway commission’s responsibility to locate the freeway, not the City of Portland.³⁴

When Portland’s city council declined to support the Mount Hood – 96th Avenue route for I-205, the Oregon State Highway Commission divulged yet another potential route for the troubled interstate segment. Bypassing the central east side of Portland and the Lake Oswego area, this new route would branch from I-5 south of Lake Oswego at West Linn, pass through a primarily rural area of Clackamas County, and would link up with the already proposed 96th Avenue segment. Recognizing that this new route would mean further delay in relieving traffic congestion in the city’s central east side, Portland City Council agreed to re-evaluate its April route decision when it met in August 1965.

After five hours of heated testimony, including that of angry residents opposed to any Mount Hood route, the city council changed its position and accepted the Mount Hood-96th route for I-205 by a vote of three to two. This time Bowes was in the minority.³⁵ Although opponents of the Mount Hood Freeway lost this round, construction of the freeway was far from certain. Within hours of the August 1965 meeting, the Bureau of Public Roads repeated its rejection of the Mount Hood route as part of the interstate system, citing their need for an “outer military bypass route” that

³⁴ Ibid. Bean (1885-1975) returned to the city council in 1949 and remained through 1966, when he retired at the age of 81. He was replaced by Frank Ivancie.

³⁵ Stan Federman, “City Okays Mt. Hood Road Plan,” *The Oregonian*, August 11, 1965.

would avoid the central portion of the city.³⁶ The only solution remained one that the City of Portland did not want and did not feel would lessen their traffic problems — the West Linn – 96th route. The Oregon State Highway Commission estimated it could be constructed for a similar amount of money as the original route even though the new route was several miles longer. The city abandoned the Laurelhurst Freeway and meekly agreed to the new route for I-205, accepting the highway commission's offer to continue the pursuit of funding for the Mount Hood Freeway.

While the federal Bureau of Public Roads proclaimed the need for a military bypass, this new route for I-205 also supported their ongoing efforts to complete the more than 41,000 miles of the interstate highway network by 1972. By choosing the West Linn route, they could avoid further delays brought by struggles over urban freeway location and construction.³⁷ Critics of this new plan called the Portland City Council well-meaning but tragically wrong for paying more attention to the “noisy foes” of the 52nd Avenue route than their own planning commission and the PVMTS.³⁸ Charging that the city and its local taxpayers would now be forced to foot the bill for much needed major street upgrades, Washington County commissioner Clayton Nyberg, a member of the PVMTS, was equally critical saying that the new route would only “deprive the Portland-Vancouver area of its traffic needs.”³⁹

Regardless of public opinion and the opinion of the highway commission's designated

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life*, (New York: Viking, 1997), 161.

³⁸ Editorial, *The Oregonian*, August 12, 1965.

³⁹ Stan Federman, “State Switches to West Linn-96th Route for I-205, City okays Mount Hood Road Plan,” *The Oregonian*, August 11, 1965.

advisory body — PVMTS — a route for I-205 had finally been chosen, leaving the Mount Hood Freeway hanging in financial and planning limbo.

Through the repeated struggles over freeway routes in the Portland area during the first half decade of the 1960s, Oregon remained at the forefront of U.S. highway construction. Coincidentally, in 1965, even as the fight over the location of I-205 had yet to reach its climax, Governor Mark O. Hatfield proclaimed the interstate highway program in Oregon a success, noting that the state led the entire nation in total mileage built and open to the public.⁴⁰ By the end of 1965, the major interstate segments in the Portland area were now either completed or in development, with their routes already selected. The *Oregonian* proclaimed 1965 as “The Year of I-205,” in which a compromise over the “ill-famed freeway” was finally and “wearily” accepted.⁴¹ All major governmental bodies officially agreed on the route for I-205, leaving the Laurelhurst Freeway dead and the potential for a Mount Hood Freeway simmering.

The Mount Hood Freeway retained significant support and still seemed likely to be constructed. The highway department, for example, included a stub of a ramp designed to connect the Marquam Bridge, opened in 1966, to a potential Mount Hood Freeway. The Portland Planning Commission and Portland City Council accepted the Division-Powell route, as part of the city’s 1966 *Comprehensive Plan*.⁴² The net effect was that property owners and residents in the vicinity of the Mount Hood route remained at the mercy of a freeway that road builders wanted badly but had yet to

⁴⁰ Mark O. Hatfield, “Biennial Report 1965,”

<http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/governors/Hatfield/biennial31965.html> (accessed January 9, 2007).

⁴¹ Stan Federman, “Portland Area Battle Over I-205 Freeway Tops Oregon State Highway News For 1965,” *The Oregonian*, December 26, 1965.

⁴² Abbott, *Portland: Planning, Politics and Growth*, 255.

finance. If the state highway commission could get more than the usual 60 percent share of financing from the federal government, then construction of the Mount Hood Freeway would be more likely. In mid-1967, the highway commission began pursuing a new strategy that could provide Mount Hood Freeway financing.

Although I-205 was now under development, the state highway commission still acknowledged the pressing need for additional traffic relief in the city of Portland. In August 1967, the highway commission approached the Bureau of Public Roads to seek their approval of a feasibility study for either upgrading the existing Banfield Expressway to interstate standards or locating an alternate route to become a replacement for the Banfield as part of the interstate system. Wilbur Smith & Associates, a South Carolina-based consulting engineering firm, conducted the study, which they completed by May 1968. Using previous PVMTS reports and state freeway plans as guides, the Wilbur Smith report, *Location Study: Interstate Route 80N, Portland, Oregon*, pointed out the geographic and right of way constraints along the existing Banfield corridor. According to Smith, even an expenditure of over \$55 million would not sufficiently upgrade the Banfield, where traffic had more than tripled in the 12 years since the freeway had first opened.⁴³

The impact of traffic volume on the Banfield was magnified by the route's rather poor "level of service," a measurement of factors such as speed, travel time, traffic interruptions, and safety.⁴⁴ The key reason behind the poor level of service lay

⁴³ According to Smith, traffic volume on the Banfield Freeway averaged 82,000 vehicles per day. Wilbur Smith & Associates, *Location Study: Interstate Route 80N, Portland, Oregon* (Columbia, SC: Wilbur Smith and Associates, 1968), Table 10, 49.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

in the narrow and curvy geography of Sullivan's Gulch, which the road shared with a major east-west rail line. At the time, freeways in the interstate system were supposed to be built for 70 mile-per-hour traffic but the Banfield was built with several curves designed for speeds of only 40 to 50 miles per hour. Exit speeds were also noted by Smith as a problem along the Banfield. While interstates were supposed to have 50 mile-per-hour on and off ramps, the Banfield's were built for only 20 mile-per-hour traffic. Heavy traffic volume coupled with slow speeds to aggravate congestion. In addition, Smith noted that the Banfield had an accident rate nearly 60 percent higher than the national average for interstate freeways. In the final analysis, Smith declared that "no feasible plan can be devised whereby the Banfield should logically remain a portion of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways."⁴⁵

The Mount Hood Freeway (Division-Powell route) was certainly straighter than the Banfield and held the potential for up to eight lanes of traffic. With an estimated cost of \$46 million, the Mount Hood Freeway would reportedly provide significant traffic relief to the Banfield and southeast Portland's major traffic streets as well.⁴⁶ Smith outlined how the Mount Hood could easily be constructed to meet the speed and safety standards that remained problematic with the Banfield. Calling the Mount Hood Freeway the "most urgently needed facility within the I-80N study area," Smith also argued that the Mount Hood route was compatible with the interstate highway program, because it would relieve local traffic congestion in southeast

⁴⁵ Ibid., 56.

⁴⁶ Smith estimated that the Mount Hood Freeway would have traffic of approximately 120,000 vehicles per day and would remove up to 35 percent of the traffic from the Banfield Freeway, as well as lowering traffic volume on Powell Boulevard and Division Street. Ibid., 49; "Mt. Hood Freeway Wins Federal Nod," *The Oregonian*, January 25, 1969.

Portland while it also addressed the rapidly deteriorating condition of properties in the Mount Hood corridor.⁴⁷ Smith argued for a freeway to be constructed in a part of the city that was deteriorating in part because it had been designated as being in the path of a future freeway. In 1967, the general location of the Mount Hood Freeway had been known for more than a decade, so it is not surprising that when the Portland Planning Commission released their 1965 report on the Mount Hood Freeway, they acknowledged a “noticeable corridor” of housing along the proposed route that was either unsound or of low economic value.⁴⁸

In his *Location Study*, Wilbur Smith did note there were some difficulties with the Mount Hood Freeway route. It was highway department policy that freeways were to be below grade as a means of being less obtrusive in urban areas. Since there was no natural “gulch” for the freeway to traverse, as there was with the Banfield Freeway, the Mount Hood Freeway would need to be “depressed” to meet this requirement, requiring the removal of tons of earth.⁴⁹ Moreover, the Mount Hood Freeway did not provide a direct link with I-80N east of Portland, meaning that traffic following this route into Portland would be diverted onto the newly constructed I-205 for nearly five miles before actually linking with the Mount Hood Freeway. Another troubling aspect of the freeway plan was the estimate that even if the Mount Hood Freeway were constructed, traffic volume by 1990 would exceed the capacity of the new freeway, the Banfield, and the Marquam Bridge at the Mount Hood’s western terminus.⁵⁰ Smith’s

⁴⁷ Ibid., 95.

⁴⁸ *Mt. Hood Freeway, Report to the Portland City Council*, 16.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 68.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 73-74.

data also did not reflect any future changes in mass transit use in the Portland area, ignoring the federal if not yet local encouragement of busses and other alternative modes of transportation.

In compiling the data for *Location Study*, Smith also examined another potential route alongside Prescott Avenue in northeast Portland. This route had also been part of local freeway plans for a number of years, but unlike the Mount Hood Freeway little had been done toward its development. Although this “Northeast” freeway could have made a much easier connection to I-80N at its eastern end and connect to the planned and high capacity Fremont Bridge at its western terminus, Smith largely dismissed the Prescott route in his report. Both the southeast and northeastern portions of Portland contained a similar population density, but housing in the potential Northeast Freeway corridor was more valuable than its Mount Hood Freeway counterpart. In part, this was because housing in the Mount Hood corridor was older, but the southeast portion of Portland and Multnomah County also had more land available for new housing to be constructed. In northeast Portland, new construction was constricted by the Columbia River and a large industrial area that included the Portland International Airport. Right-of-way acquisition costs for the Northeast route were therefore estimated at nearly \$5 million more than the Mount Hood Freeway. In addition, the Banfield Freeway already crossed through the northeastern portion of the city, meaning that a Northeast Freeway would not provide much traffic relief for the area’s surface streets but would require the relocation of

nearly 5,000 residents.⁵¹ By comparison, Smith estimated that the Mount Hood Freeway would require fewer than 3,500 relocations and that the Mount Hood Freeway would have a daily traffic volume 88 percent higher than the Northeast Freeway.⁵²

If the Bureau of Public Roads would agree to swap the I-80N designation then the Mount Hood Freeway could be constructed with the state paying less than eight percent of the total cost, a small sum compared to the 40 percent the state would have to pay if they moved forward with an “intrastate” version of the Mount Hood. If the Banfield remained part of the interstate system, it would require at least \$55 million in upgrades and still would not have the traffic volume capacity of the Mount Hood Freeway, which could be built in its entirety for nearly \$10 million less. Given the automobile focus of the era, the idea of gaining an entire new road, one that would reduce existing traffic problems and cost less than upgrading the existing freeway network, was difficult to dismiss. Obtaining the interstate designation for the Mount Hood Freeway really was a “two-for-one” bargain.⁵³ With the release of *Location Study*, the Oregon State Highway Department requested that the Bureau of Public Roads switch the designation of I-80N from the Banfield to the Mount Hood route.

As the state highway commission worked to determine a method of financing the Mount Hood Freeway, major changes that would play an important role in the Mount Hood Freeway story were unfolding at the federal level. In early 1967, the U.S.

⁵¹ Wilbur Smith & Associates, *Location Study*, 64.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 82.

⁵³ Editorial, *The Oregonian*, January 28, 1969.

Department of Transportation was created and for the first time freeway projects were required to consider their environmental impacts.⁵⁴ Section 4(f) of Public Law 89-670 outlined new federal policy mandating that transportation plans should maintain or enhance “the natural beauty of lands crossed by transportation activities or facilities.”⁵⁵ The nation’s first secretary of transportation, Alan S. Boyd, worried about the environmental and social impacts of urban freeways and began implementing regulations aimed at limiting freeway building and increasing the development of alternative transportation methods. Boyd’s administration included mass transit proponents and anti-freeway activists who were connected nationwide to a growing anti freeway movement.⁵⁶ President Lyndon Johnson recognized the impact of urban freeways, suggesting that local governments and affected citizens should be given the right to participate in transportation planning efforts.⁵⁷

The 1968 Federal Aid Highway Act required that at least two public hearings be held before deciding on any portion of the interstate system. These new hearing requirements played an important role in Portland, forcing the Mount Hood Freeway planning process to face increased public scrutiny. The 1968 act also required that highway departments provide “safe and sanitary” relocation housing, prior to the acquisition of property.⁵⁸ By the end of 1968, transportation plans for Washington D.C., addressed the new federal legislation and acknowledged the negative impacts of

⁵⁴ Schrag, “The Freeway Fight in Washington D.C.,” 655.

⁵⁵ Department of Transportation Act, Public Law 89-670, *U. S. Statutes at Large* (1966).

⁵⁶ Schrag, “The Freeway Fight in Washington D.C.,” 656.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 658.

⁵⁸ Raymond Mohl, “Stop the Road: Freeway Revolts in American Cities” *Journal of Urban History* 30 no. 5 (2004): 681.

freeways, laying the groundwork for freeway revolts elsewhere and including Portland. When Richard Nixon took office in January 1969, freeway planning around the nation had become quite contentious. Battles over freeways in Washington D.C., New Orleans, and other cities continued to rage. Seeing this, the new president acted sympathetically toward freeway opponents, proposing a program that would match federal support for highways with funds for transit.⁵⁹

In January 1969, the Bureau of Public Roads agreed to adopt the Wilbur Smith recommendation, switching the Interstate 80 North designation from the Banfield Freeway to the Mount Hood Freeway. After years of fruitless attempts, the state highway commission had finally gained approval to make the Mount Hood Freeway part of the interstate system and receive the much sought after 92 percent federal funding.⁶⁰ Although the freeway had been in planning for over a decade, no right of way purchases had been made, and a specific route had not been officially chosen. Once the Bureau of Public Roads approved the new I-80N route, money became available for the highway department to begin such purchases, which they did in earnest. When asked when construction could be expected to begin, state highway engineer Forrest Cooper acknowledged that even though the project was moving forward, construction would likely not begin for another three years.⁶¹ This meant more waiting for property owners, freeway advocates, freeway opponents, and road builders.

⁵⁹ Schrag, "The Freeway Fight in Washington D.C.", 667.

⁶⁰ "Mt. Hood Freeway Wins Federal Nod," *The Oregonian*, January 25, 1969.

⁶¹ Ibid.

To obtain feedback and recommendations on the Mount Hood route, and to meet – at least in part – federal requirements, the state highway commission held an all-day public hearing Friday May 16, 1969. Although the meeting was held at Portland’s Civic Auditorium, with a seating capacity of nearly 3,000, less than 150 people attended the meeting, suggesting that opposition to the freeway remained relatively unorganized. The *Oregonian* noted that fewer people attended this hearing than had attended other freeway location hearings in the past.⁶² Two factors limited public attendance. First, the meeting lasted an entire workday, making it difficult to attend for residents living in the freeway’s path who were employed. Second, opponents still had little power over planning activities. With all jurisdictions agreeing on the proposed freeway’s path, there was little anyone could do at that time to stop the project from moving forward. Only five area residents testified, with at least one suggesting that the meager attendance indicated that many residents had given up their opposition to the freeway, feeling there was nothing they could do to alter the plans of state and local officials.⁶³ One resident who spoke in opposition to the freeway, Flora Rigotti, read a letter she had first written in 1965 to William Bowes. Calling freeways an “encumbrance that destroys the immediate area, and places the surrounding homes in the shadow of a concrete forest,” Rigotti expressed her concern over the loss of property and the displacement of long-time residents in the path of the Mount Hood

⁶² Stan Federman. “Portland, County Officials Back Division-Powell Corridor for Freeway,” *The Oregonian*, May 17, 1969.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Freeway, stating she was “against any freeway that cuts so extensively into an established residential area.”⁶⁴

Early opposition to the Mount Hood Freeway originated with two primary groups. One worried about loss of their property and how they would be compensated. A second did not want to lose their property nor have their neighborhoods bisected by an immense freeway. Rigotti, a long-time resident of southeast Portland whose home was directly in the Freeway’s path, reflected the twin arguments of early anti-freeway activists. Watford Reed, a writer for the *Oregon Journal* and resident of southeast Portland represented a pivotal change in freeway opposition in Portland, proclaiming he was “not going to bow low to the shrine of the great God automobile.” Reed pointed out how cities like San Francisco had managed to halt many freeway projects in their cities and questioned why nothing was being done to address the impact of freeways on air pollution.⁶⁵ Reed’s was the local voice of a new and slowly growing anti-freeway movement, one that questioned continued road-building and automobile-focused urban planning. Freeway opponents in Portland no longer argued solely about neighborhood disruption or compensation.

After the all-day meeting, the Portland City Council and the Multnomah County Commission recommended the long-favored Division-Powell route for the Mount Hood Freeway to the state highway commission. The city and county also had support from the Portland Chamber of Commerce, and the 13 member governing

⁶⁴ Flora Rigotti, quoted in Oregon State Highway Commission, *Corridor Public Hearing Marquam Bridge (I-5), East Portland Freeway (I-205), Section Mt. Hood Freeway (I-80N) Multnomah County*, May 16, 1969, 27, Box 32, Folder 12, Schunk, Terry Doyle, Subject Files, Correspondence 1967-1972, Stanley Parr Archives and Record Center, Portland Oregon.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

committee of Southeast Uplift (SEUL), a city-sponsored community organization similar to the Model Cities programs of the era.⁶⁶ SEUL had been created in 1968 to address housing and other social issues in southeast Portland's predominately working class neighborhoods. In keeping with the city's emphasis on urban renewal, one that dated back to the Federal Housing Act of 1949 and which codified the city's neighborhood plans from 1958, Portland's planning director Lloyd Keefe declared that the Division-Powell route for the Mount Hood Freeway would clear out many blocks of substandard housing.⁶⁷ The housing Keefe was referring to had been declared 'unsound' as early as 1965, and since 1955 had been directly in the path of the planned Mount Hood Freeway. Keefe also recommended that the highway commission acquire enough right-of-way land for mass transit use along the Division-Powell route, stating "we cannot continue to rely solely on the automobile to get our people to and from work, and mass transit is one of the supplements which we need to consider seriously."⁶⁸ The Portland Planning Commission had begun to recognize the impacts of the automobile on the urban environment.

Multnomah County planning director Robert Baldwin also supported the Division-Powell route, focusing on its ability to redistribute traffic and "to stimulate desirable new land uses."⁶⁹ The Columbia Region Association of Governments (CRAG), established in 1966, had the task of advising regional planning efforts in the Portland metropolitan area. On the Mount Hood Freeway route, CRAG deferred to the

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Stan Federman. "Portland, County Officials Back Division-Powell Corridor for Freeway," *The Oregonian*, 17 May, 1969.

⁶⁸ OSHC Meeting Minutes, 16 May, 1969.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

recommendations of the Portland City Council and the Multnomah County Commission. Assistant state traffic engineer R.L. Schroeder of the Oregon State Highway Department added an engineering perspective, one that concurred with the local jurisdictions. Schroeder contended that the Mount Hood Freeway would meet their goal of “fast, safe, and efficient transportation” by removing 85,000 vehicles from other major east-west thoroughfares and reducing the annual number of accidents on these routes by 1,100.⁷⁰

With all local jurisdictions in agreement, the state highway commission formally approved the Division-Powell route for the Mount Hood Freeway in July 1969.⁷¹ Unlike with the routing of I-205, this time the Bureau of Public Roads immediately noted it would only take a few weeks for the expected approval.⁷² Local desire to build the freeway remained equally strong, because the continually overburdened Banfield Freeway, remained the only high-speed east-west thoroughfare on Portland’s east side. Compounding traffic woes was the fact that Gresham, lying at the southeastern edge of the city, had become Oregon’s fastest growing suburban community. Coincidentally, by the summer of 1969, the expected cost of the freeway project had risen to \$75 million, while the highway department estimated that the freeway would displace 5,520 people, two-thousand more than the estimate in Wilbur Smith’s 1968 Location Study.⁷³ Even with rising costs and a dramatic increase in the number of people to be displaced, opposition remained unorganized. Highway

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Stan Federman. “Road Panel Selects Mt. Hood Freeway Route,” *The Oregonian*, 9 July, 1969.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

commission chair Glenn Jackson noted his surprise that the project was moving forward so smoothly.⁷⁴

In the summer of 1969, freeway opposition in Portland remained steeped in concern over disruption and compensation, with environmental concerns yet to reach the forefront. With the state's formal approval of the Division-Powell route for the Mount Hood Freeway, a new opponent stirred, one with close ties to the affected neighborhoods. On hearing of the route selection, several churches in the freeway's path expressed concern over the potential loss of property and expressed the need for adequate compensation. Threatening court action, church leaders from St. Mark's Lutheran, located in the freeway's path at SE 54th and Powell Boulevard, insisted the church receive compensation for the loss of their entire property rather than only the portion through which the freeway would pass.⁷⁵ In response to these legal threats, Glenn Jackson merely noted they would "worry about that if and when it happens."⁷⁶ Church leaders insisted they were not opposed to freeways but were concerned about their ability to relocate within their existing neighborhoods. Jackson was right that the process had gone smoothly so far, but further changes in federal policy would add a whole new layer to freeway opponents' arguments and place the future of the Mount Hood Freeway in question.

Federal legislation in 1969 and 1970 gave opponents of the Mount Hood Freeway new arguments. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), passed in

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Stan Federman, "Churches, School, Assess Relocation Trouble," *The Oregonian*, July 10, 1969.

⁷⁶ Stan Federman, "Road Panel Selects Mt. Hood Freeway Route," *The Oregonian*, 9 July, 1969.

late 1969, required that federal agencies address the effects of interstate projects on the environment through environmental impact statements.⁷⁷ Also in 1969, the Federal Highway Administration addressed the impact of highway location, issuing a memorandum encouraging further cooperation among federal, state, and local officials.⁷⁸ Within the next year, Congress modified the Clean Air Act and passed the 1970 Federal Aid Highway Act, which required the creation of standards for addressing the social, environmental, and economic impacts of new federally funded highways. The Mount Hood Freeway project had to satisfy all these new federal requirements.

While policy changes created new challenges for freeway builders, the local political scene had changed as well. In 1967, Tom McCall took office as Oregon's governor, ushering in a new era of pro-environment politics in the state.⁷⁹ McCall's pro-environment stance was steeped in the understanding that poor land use planning was the root cause to Oregon's environmental problems.⁸⁰ By 1969, he had helped to create the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and was urging the closure of Portland's Harbor Drive as a means of beautifying the Willamette riverfront. McCall was not necessarily anti-freeway, even though he was intimately involved in a battle with the highway department over their plans to build a highway through Nestucca Spit on the Oregon Coast. McCall's actions in that instance were primarily directed at

⁷⁷ *I-80N Environmental Study Freeway Design Alternatives, Volume 1*, 12.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Thomas Lawson McCall (1913–1983), became a prominent proponent of the environment in Oregon after producing a television documentary in 1962 on Willamette River pollution. He later served two terms as governor of Oregon (1967–1974). Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1994), 147.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 242.

preserving the state's beaches. The governor's stance on land use and the environment helped empower freeway opponents, in particular those who opposed the Mount Hood Freeway and who sought alternatives to road building and automobile use.

By the end of the 1960s the makeup of Portland's city council was also changing. Frank Ivancie replaced Ormond Bean in 1967, bringing a younger but pro-freeway voice to the council. Ivancie had previously served as an assistant to Mayor Schrunk and was viewed by many as an extension of the "old boy network" that had been running Portland for decades.⁸¹ By early 1970, additional personnel changes to the council marked the beginning of a shift in attitudes toward urban development and transportation.⁸² With a fresh political perspective within city council and pro-environmental legislation supported at the state and federal levels, the 1970s proved to be a watershed in Portland's transportation history.

⁸¹ Steve Forrester, "Ivancie the Terrible", *Willamette Week*, March 9, 2005.

⁸² Abbott, *Portland: Planning, Politics and Growth*, 174.

CHAPTER THREE: THE MOUNT HOOD FREEWAY REVOLT

During the mid-1960s, opposition to the Mount Hood Freeway began with a small group of individuals who organized against the destruction of their urban neighborhoods. Church and school groups, especially those whose interests lay directly in the path of the proposed freeway, led the initial charge with little noticeable support from public officials. By 1970, the number of those in opposition to the Mount Hood Freeway was on the rise, and several new legislative weapons had become available. Federal policy, including the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the Clean Air Act of 1970, helped empower freeway activists to expand their arguments to include environmental concerns. 1970 also marked the establishment of the nation's first "Earth Day." What began as a grassroots environmental effort was celebrated by as many as 10 million Americans.¹ Concern over environmental conditions was a topical issue and the ensuing battle over the Mount Hood Freeway helped usher in this new age in environmental politics, land use, and transportation planning in Portland.

Meanwhile, changes in 1968 to the Urban Mass Transit Act had made federal funds available for the purchase of municipal transit operations, an idea William Bowes had suggested a decade earlier was needed in Portland.² Even with the potential for increased federal funding of public mass transit, Portland Mayor Terry Schrunk at first remained in support of Portland's private bus system. In June 1968, he

¹ Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: the Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington DC: Island Press, 2005), 157.

² William Bowes to Portland City Council, 3 January 1958, Box 2, Speeches and Writings, 1950-1968, Bowes Papers.

stated he did “not anticipate public ownership of this transportation system in the near future.”³ Within months, Schrunk’s position changed when it became clear that Rose City Transit, who held a monopoly on bus transit in Portland, was in danger of shutting down its service. Rose City Transit had been experiencing financial difficulty for more than a decade. The number of bus passengers continued to decline, while operating expenses were rapidly increasing. From 1968 to 1969, Rose City lost nearly eight percent of its passengers, while their operating expenses had increased more than 13 percent. The city also controlled bus fares and would not allow “Rosy” to raise them in order to meet the wage demands of its drivers. In August 1969, not long after the Federal Highway Administration approved the Mount Hood Freeway to be part of the interstate system, the City of Portland began targeting Rose City Transit for a public takeover.⁴

Faced with the possibility of a complete failure of local area mass transit, and wanting to address local traffic and air pollution problems, the Portland City Council asked the Oregon State Legislature in mid-1969, to authorize local mass transit tax districts. The legislature soon approved House Bill 1808, giving the Portland the authority to acquire and operate Rose City Transit on an interim basis, while the new transit district was organized. By December 1, 1969, the Tri-County Metropolitan Transit District (Tri-Met) had become operational and a new era for mass transit in

³ Terry Schrunk to Oregon Congressional Delegation, 14 June 1968, Box 16, Folder 2 Mass Transit, Terry Schrunk Papers, Stanley Parr Archives Center, Portland, Oregon.

⁴ Doug Yocum, “Portland Takeover of Buses Mirrors Action All Over U.S.,” *Oregon Journal*, August 11, 1969.

Portland was underway.⁵ The creation of Tri-Met at tax payers' expense forced local officials to examine ways to increase usage of the local bus network. Retailers in downtown Portland were also suffering the effects of suburban growth and by 1969 plans to rejuvenate the area were in development. New plans for downtown emphasized mass transit and made Tri-Met a principal player. Although the Portland City Council still supported urban freeway development, alternatives were now on the table. In the coming few years the idea of building additional freeways allowing greater numbers of automobiles into downtown, would be turned on its head.

The Portland City Council was also in the midst of major political change. Between November 1969 and the end of 1970, three of the five city council positions became available. In November 1969, after 30 years in elected office, William Bowes, the commissioner who for so many years had advocated for freeways in the city, died. Stanley Earl, another longtime city commissioner, died soon thereafter. Then, after 12 years in office, city commissioner Buck Grayson announced he would not run for reelection. These three positions were filled by a new breed of local politician, supportive of the ideals of urban critic Jane Jacobs and favoring increased citizen involvement, pro-environmental land use, and new transportation legislation. The arrival of Lloyd Anderson, Connie McCready, and, most importantly, Neil Goldschmidt signaled a major change in the city's approach to urban land use and transportation planning.

⁵ Lansing, *Portland: People, Politics, and Power*, 378.

Lloyd Anderson, the first of the new city commissioners, replaced William Bowes after his death in late 1969. Anderson had an urban planning background and brought a new perspective on transportation issues to the city.⁶ Connie McCready, a former state legislator was appointed to fill Stanley Earl's position after he died in March 1970.⁷ The arrival of Neil Goldschmidt, a young lawyer who had grown up in Eugene and had been in Portland for less than three years, had the greatest impact on the Portland City Council. Elected in November 1970, Goldschmidt proved to be the catalyst that helped jumpstart several major new city projects.⁸ With Goldschmidt, McCready, and Anderson in office, preserving the city's core through a new appreciation of the environment and including greater citizen participation became the council's focus.

Not only did Oregon now have a governor who supported changes to existing land use planning efforts, there were also at least two members of the city council that shared a similar vision for the Portland area. Anderson and Goldschmidt both recognized that the current land use guidelines in Portland were outdated. Land use guidelines for the city had long been based upon existing transportation plans. Roads

⁶ Lloyd Anderson served as Multnomah County planning director in the 1950s and as chief planner for the Portland office of consulting firm CH2M Hill, prior to joining city council. Abbott, *Portland Planning, Politics, and Growth*, 174.

⁷ Connie McCready (1921-2000) served two terms in the Oregon State legislature before being appointed to fill Stanley Earl's city council position in 1970. She served on the council until 1979 when she was appointed to succeed Neil Goldschmidt, who left the council to join the Carter administration. McCready only served as mayor for a little more than one year. She was defeated by Frank Ivancie in the 1980 mayoral election. Lansing, 390.

⁸ Neil Goldschmidt (1940-) served two years as city commissioner (1971-72) before being elected to replace Terry Schunk as mayor. He served as mayor from 1973-1979, before leaving to become Secretary of Transportation under President Jimmy Carter. After Carter lost his re-election, Goldschmidt returned to Oregon, running successfully for governor in 1986, and serving one term from 1987-1991. Ibid., 391.

were built and development, where these roads were constructed, soon followed. The result was expansive growth in areas like the city of Gresham, to the east of Portland, and in Washington County to the west. By 1971, the “roads first” planning emphasis in the Portland area was being reconsidered by local government agencies. The City of Portland, Multnomah County, and the Columbia Region Association of Governments (CRAG), the area’s regional planning advisory body created in 1966, began to consider how they wanted land to be used before looking at how the local transportation infrastructure would be constructed in order to accommodate it.

Air pollution was a top concern of Goldschmidt and his advisors, who blamed the automobile for its impact on urban air quality. Their anti-automobile arguments were not without merit. By the early 1970s, the Oregon State Highway Department recognized that more than 95 percent of carbon monoxide emissions in the Portland area were being produced by motor vehicles.⁹ Compounding this problem, local leaders had for years tolerated the demolition of downtown buildings and the construction of parking lots for an ever-increasing volume of automobile traffic. During his tenure as commissioner, Goldschmidt urged Mayor Terry Schrunk to continue developing a new plan for downtown Portland, one that would revitalize the city center and make it more attractive to the public. Since the end of the Second World War, increasing numbers of area residents had been drawn toward the suburbs and their modern shopping areas. Meanwhile, more and more people were working in downtown Portland, but retail sales outside the workplace continued to decrease.

⁹ *I-80N Environmental Study Freeway Design Alternatives, Volume I*, III-59.

During the last year of Schrunk's administration, designs for the *Downtown Plan* slowly moved forward under the guidance of the Portland Planning Bureau, the local office of the engineering firm CH2M-Hill, and the Plan's Citizen's Advisory Committee. On top of their work, another step needed to be addressed: the increased automobile traffic in the city's core. Plans for a new bus mall and an expansion of the burgeoning Tri-Met bus system were aimed at convincing people there were viable, safe, and less polluting alternatives to reach the city center. At odds with the new land use and transportation goals were the numerous plans in development for additional freeways and expanded roadways throughout the Portland area. By the early 1970s, the Mount Hood Freeway was next in line for interstate development in Portland. Yet because the Mount Hood Freeway project was moving forward at the same time federal laws, local politicians, and the general public were becoming more sensitive towards the environmental impacts of urban freeways, the route became increasingly controversial.

Although he repeatedly pointed out the need to reduce air pollution in Portland, Goldschmidt initially did not focus his efforts on cancelling the Mount Hood Freeway. The route had substantial official support from the federal government, Portland City Council, Multnomah County, and the Oregon State Highway Department. Even neighborhood groups, such as Southeast Uplift (SEUL), had signed on in support of the Division-Powell route chosen for the Mount Hood Freeway. Goldschmidt supported anti-freeway activists elsewhere in the city. In September 1971, tempers in Portland's City Hall flared between Goldschmidt and Commissioner Anderson over

the Rose City Freeway, a potential freeway not yet in development.¹⁰ If constructed, the proposed freeway would connect I-5 and I-405 to I-205, cutting through northeast Portland beginning at the nearly completed Fremont Bridge over the Willamette River. Goldschmidt and Anderson sparred over how the city should address freeway planning. Anderson was an urban planner by training and he favored a controlled top-down planning approach. Goldschmidt, on the other hand, favored the input of area residents in the planning process, going so far as to encourage anti-freeway activists to speak out publicly against the Rose City Freeway. Even though the Rose City Freeway was not in the immediate plans of state or city officials, the trouble over its route presented the young commissioner with an opportunity to develop his pro-citizen involvement and pro-environment agenda. Still, Goldschmidt's early anti-freeway efforts did little to support opponents of other Portland area freeways, and at the time, the highway department was moving forward in purchasing rights-of-way and initiating required environmental studies on the Mount Hood Freeway.

In December 1971, Sensible Transportation Options for People (STOP), a group seeking to preserve affordable housing in Portland and encourage alternatives to automobile use, asked Portland City Council to reverse its approval of the Mount Hood Freeway. In its first newsletter published that month, STOP criticized freeway development in the Portland area, contending that freeway construction should be halted at least until the Portland metropolitan area had a regional and long-range transportation plan in place. STOP bolstered its criticism of freeways by pointing out

¹⁰ "Freeway Squabble Triggers City Hall Row," *The Oregonian*, September 9, 1971.

the impact such roads had on low-income and rental housing. They also expressed concern that the Mount Hood Freeway would be incapable of accommodating expected traffic volumes. If this occurred, STOP argued that the highway department would likely propose building yet another freeway through southeast Portland, this time along Johnson Creek.¹¹ Their worry was not without merit. A Johnson Creek freeway route had been part of the highway department's 1955 freeway plan for the Portland area.

Between 1969 and 1973 key federal legislation changed the face of transportation infrastructure projects around the United States. The implementation of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) meant that a study of a project's environmental impact had to be completed before it could receive federal funding. The purpose of environmental impact statements was not to halt projects, but to ensure that the physical and social impacts of large federally funded projects were given full consideration before approval. In Portland, development of the Mount Hood Freeway fell under these new guidelines, requiring an environmental impact study (EIS). While the State Highway Commission completed the EIS, planning for the freeway's design and the acquisition of right-of-way could continue, but any further development or construction was put on hold. A second piece of federal legislation, the Clean Air Act of 1970, required that cities meet certain federal air quality standards by 1975, a task that would be difficult in Portland if additional freeways drew more traffic into the

¹¹ Sensible Transportation Options for People, *STOP Newsletter*, City of Portland, Planning Project Records 206.34, Sensible Transportation Options for People (STOP) 1972-1974, Stanley Parr Archives and Records Center, Portland (hereafter referred to as SPARC).

city center. With the EIS likely to take several months to complete, anti-freeway activists had time to halt the Mount Hood Freeway's construction.

The early 1970s also marked a watershed in federal transportation funding. Signaling the coming changes in 1969, transportation secretary John A. Volpe halted the highly controversial Vieux Carré freeway in New Orleans. Volpe recognized the need to re-institute the diverse transportation options that had been allowed to atrophy around the U.S. over several previous decades. To Volpe, the answer to the nation's transportation difficulties was no longer simply to add additional road capacity. Instead, Volpe saw value in revitalizing older modes of transportation such as trolleys and passenger rail. In 1970, he convinced President Nixon to sign legislation creating AMTRAK, adding passenger rail service to the nation's federal transportation network.¹² Throughout his tenure, Volpe also continued to urge that the Interstate Highway Trust Fund be opened to transportation projects other than highway construction.¹³

Faced with increasing public opposition to urban freeways and growing concern over urban environmental conditions, the once powerful "highway lobby" found itself under siege. By 1972, Congress was heatedly debating the issue of opening up the Interstate Highway Trust Fund for other uses. The National Governors Conference, once a great supporter of highway construction, began calling for a general transportation fund instead.¹⁴ The United Auto Workers, the National League

¹² Lewis, *Divided Highways*, 218.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 217.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 222.

of Cities, the American Institute of Architects, and the pro-environmental Highway Action Coalition sought similar changes to the Interstate Highway Trust Fund. Nixon replaced Volpe with Claude S. Brinegar, who was also supportive of the further development of mass transit, soon after he was re-elected in November 1972.¹⁵ The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973 signaled that Congress was interested in making it financially more feasible for U.S. cities to pursue alternative solutions to their traffic dilemmas. Under the new legislation, money once targeted specifically for interstate construction could now be used for other transportation purposes, including mass transit. Soon after the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973 was enacted, the Mount Hood Freeway became a significant national test of this new system of federal transportation funding.

In late 1971, the Portland Vancouver Metropolitan Transportation Study (PVMTS) released an interim report outlining recommended freeways and other major roads for the Portland area. Under the direction of CRAG, this group's work was directed toward meeting federal comprehensive transportation planning guidelines. PVMTS based their study on data acquired and modified since the Oregon State Highway Department had released its freeway and expressway report for the Portland area in 1955. The map outlining the PVMTS recommendations reflected a need for many of the same freeways recommended more than a decade earlier.¹⁶ Yet this report also contained several assumptions that led to heavy criticism of the PVMTS plan by Goldschmidt and other anti-freeway advocates. PVMTS assumed that there would be

¹⁵ Ibid., 231.

¹⁶ *I-80N Environmental Study Freeway Design Alternatives, Volume 1*, 1-2.

little change in the use of Portland area mass transit, even though Tri-Met had already been created. A second key assumption was that suburban growth would continue at the same pace and in the same general locations as they had in recent decades.¹⁷ These assumptions led PVMTS to recommend the same freeway plan for Portland that had been suggested in 1955. With the release of the PVMTS study, anti-freeway activists had fodder for criticizing the status quo transportation planning that continued to favor the automobile.

In early 1972, Mount Hood Freeway opposition had yet to erupt into a full-blown revolt, but trouble was certainly brewing.¹⁸ The *Oregonian* critiqued anti-freeway public attitudes, asking “If You Kill Freeways, Then What?”¹⁹ Public opinion about spending \$636 million on freeways and highways had become more and more divided. Assistant state highway engineer Robert Schroeder, noted that “our present land-use pattern and over-all growth pattern, require freeways to handle traffic.”²⁰ But the *Oregonian* also pointed out that there was a possibility of changes to federal policy that would allow interstate highway funds to be made available for mass transit systems. In 1972, federal support for transportation infrastructure still came predominately in the form of money for highway construction. But with changing public attitudes, the idea of using such funds for mass transit had begun to grow in popularity. Still, without a comprehensive transportation plan for the Portland area that included alternatives to automobile travel, Schroeder was correct when he wondered,

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ “Portland Freeway Schedule Linked to Environmental Battle,” *The Oregonian*, January 9, 1972.

¹⁹ “If You Kill Freeways, Then What?,” *The Oregonian*, January 9, 1972.

²⁰ Ibid.

“If we decide not to build freeways, then how are we going to solve the problems that will exist without them?”²¹

Meanwhile, Portland Mayor Terry Shrunk, who was in failing health, decided against running for reelection.²² Neil Goldschmidt ran to become Portland’s next mayor. His campaign platform included “a plan for a decent mass transit system and an end to urban freeways built through neighborhoods.”²³ Goldschmidt may have recognized that he could not possibly halt all of the freeways planned for the Portland area, especially Interstate 205. By 1972, development of the I-205 corridor beginning at its connection to I-5 in Clackamas County was well underway. In addition, Goldschmidt could not argue strongly that I-205 would increase downtown air pollution because its route would not pass through or into the city center. Construction of I-205 faced fewer governmental hurdles at all levels and there was far less citizen outcry against it. Goldschmidt instead focused his freeway opposition on another proposed route, one that had several hurdles to cross and one that had growing public opposition. He began calling the Mount Hood Freeway an “immediate threat to southeast Portland.”²⁴

Goldschmidt’s anti-Mount Hood Freeway efforts were soon bolstered by a series of studies showing the negative impact the freeway would have on the city’s

²¹ Ibid.

²² Terry Shrunk (1913-1975) was a former county sheriff, who served 4 terms as mayor of Portland from 1957-1972. Lansing, 476.

²³ “Neil Goldschmidt for Mayor,” campaign flyer, 1972, Box 117, Folder 12, Neil Goldschmidt Papers, Oregon State Archives, Salem, Oregon
http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/governors/goldschmidt/box117/goldschmidt_117_012.pdf (accessed September 29, 2008) (hereafter referred to as Goldschmidt Papers).

²⁴ Neil Goldschmidt to Richard Ross, 28 April 1972, file 4, Goldschmidt, Neil E., Collected Reports and Studies, Basic Facts on the Mount Hood Freeway, SPARC.

infrastructure. In March 1972, Portland Public Schools (PPS) released a study of the impact of the Mount Hood Freeway on the Portland school system. According to the report, not only would one school be eliminated if the freeway were constructed, but travel to and from several other schools would also be made more difficult. Moreover, PPS asserted that the freeway's location would cause an increase in noise levels near many schools and several school facilities would become underutilized because of the displacement of area residents.²⁵ Soon after the school report was released, STOP reiterated its opposition to the proposed freeway. With increasing public interest in the project, the highway department decided to respond.

In March 1972, in an effort to better inform the public of its planning for the Mount Hood Freeway, the highway department opened an office in southeast Portland, where residents could learn about the freeway project and how it might affect them. Although the highway department requested public engagement in the freeway development process, their new freeway office remained open only on weekdays during hours when many workers could not visit the center. In a public statement, the Public Affairs Director for the highway department, Gary Sund, reiterated the need for more citizen involvement in the freeway development process, asserting that the highway department was still intent on building the freeway and that the successful relocation of area residents was of prime importance. Sund also noted that the primary goal of the highway department remained that of moving "cars and goods."²⁶ Public

²⁵ "Freeway Route Hit in Study By Schools," *The Oregonian*, March 16, 1972.

²⁶ "Residents of Southeast Portland to Help Plan New Freeway," *The Oregonian*, March 12, 1972.

input was welcome, but it was clear from Sund that the highway department preferred to receive design advice rather than discuss the actual merits of freeway construction.

In the midst of his candidacy to become Portland's next mayor, Neil Goldschmidt began asserting that, "until the citizens of Southeast Portland are convinced there has been a 'real' study of whether or not this freeway is needed, we will not have their cooperation or participation in any effort to build it."²⁷ Goldschmidt had begun to use a multi-pronged approach to halt or further delay the Mount Hood Freeway. In seeking support for his position from other Portland City Council members, he requested that the city formally request that the highway department include a "no-build" option in its Mount Hood Freeway EIS.²⁸ Goldschmidt also called for the highway department to halt further right-of-way purchases and house demolitions in the proposed freeway's path until a no-build study had been completed. While demanding that the entire freeway design and planning process include the participation of as many local residents as possible, Goldschmidt also pointed out that it should not be "automatically assumed that any neighborhood organization is representative of its neighborhood."²⁹ In this respect Goldschmidt was maintaining a rather nuanced political stance on the freeway issue. On one hand he was trying to halt the freeway and encourage citizen involvement, but on the other he seemed to leave the door open should the majority of public opinion ultimately favor the freeway's construction.

²⁷ Neil Goldschmidt to Lloyd Anderson, 23 March, 1972, Box 4, Folder 8, Goldschmidt, Neil E., Subject Files, Mount Hood Freeway Controversy, SPARC.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

By early 1972, more than 150 properties had been acquired by the state highway department in the planned Mount Hood Freeway route. Although some owners sold their properties willingly, many other residents in the freeway's path were increasingly outraged at how the state handled property purchases and relocation.³⁰ Moreover, anti-freeway sentiment was now emboldened by the several book-length critiques of the interstate highway program that had been published in the years since 1969. These freeway critics chastised the Federal Highway Administration for its strict focus on the automobile and its neglect of mass transportation alternatives. A.Q. Mowbray's book *Road to Ruin*, was the first to criticize the interstate highway program, followed closely by Helen Leavitt's *Super Highway - Super Hoax* (1970) and Ben Kelley's *The Pavers and the Paved* (1971). Historian Tom Lewis has pointed to Kelley's book as particularly damaging to freeway advocates, as Kelley was at one time a high ranking official in the U.S. Department of Transportation.³¹ By 1972, even Goldschmidt's former college buddy and campaign advisor Ronald Buel had joined the debate over freeways with his book *Dead End* (1972), which vehemently attacked urban freeway design and freely touted the urban reformist ideology of Jane Jacobs.³² By the time of the May 1972 election, a nationwide "freeway revolt" was in full swing.

In May 1972, Goldschmidt won the mayoral primary with a plurality of votes that all but eliminated the need for a fall election, where he would eventually run

³⁰ Neil Goldschmidt to George Baldwin, 23 March, 1972, Box 4, Folder 8, Goldschmidt, Neil E., Subject Files, Mount Hood Freeway Controversy, SPARC.

³¹ Lewis, 236.

³² Ronald A. Buel, *Dead End: The Automobile in Mass Transportation* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 107.

unopposed.³³ In the months leading up to his inauguration, Goldschmidt reiterated his opposition to the Mount Hood Freeway. The *New York Times* called Goldschmidt “maybe the most provocative mayor in the country” because of his “opposition to the proliferation of automobiles.”³⁴ Goldschmidt declared bravely that “I know they say the American will never give up his car or his right to drive it when and where he pleases, but if that’s so the city is dead anyway.”³⁵ He no longer focused broadly on pollution, parking, noise, or traffic congestion. Instead, he aimed directly at urban freeways, and the Mount Hood was his locus of concern. Citing the potential displacement of 5,000 people if the Mount Hood was constructed, Goldschmidt pointed out how the loss of housing would lead to more people moving to the suburbs, creating a need for more freeways and thereby requiring the destruction of even more housing in the urban core.³⁶ Although designs for the Mount Hood Freeway did include bus-only transit lanes, Goldschmidt refused to temper his criticism, pointing out that, if mass transit was the answer, there should be further study of mass transit-only corridors rather than continued freeway construction. The key, according to Goldschmidt, was comprehensive land-use and transportation planning, something that the federal government had been requiring since the mid-1960s to receive interstate highway funding. CRAG had been created to help develop such plans, but in 1972 had still not yet completed a final report on Portland area transportation needs.

³³ Lansing, 395.

³⁴ Tom Wicker, “Mr. Mayor at 31,” *New York Times*, May 25, 1972

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

With public pressure mounting in June 1972, the highway department asked Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, the firm hired to conduct the required EIS for the freeway, to include the “no-build option” recommended by Goldschmidt and others. Doubts about the freeway existed at every level of government within the state, but the highway department continued pursuit of the freeway’s construction, and with good reason. Although there were many freeway opponents, the Mount Hood Freeway was still well supported by the general public. During the summer of 1972, a poll of residents living in or near the proposed route was conducted by the highway department. The results revealed that most people were in favor of the Mount Hood Freeway. In their report, the highway department noted that of the “1,300 homes and 150 businesses” interviewed, very few residents did not use cars at all.³⁷ Although the poll summary pointed out that most of those opposed to the freeway had lived in their homes for 20 years or more, it also revealed that there remained a large percentage of homeowners in the freeway’s path who favored construction. The majority of those under retirement age said they needed the freeway to get to work and therefore were not averse to relocation.³⁸ One could argue that Goldschmidt, and possibly other freeway opponents were asserting their desire for citizen participation on one hand while ignoring the desires of a majority of area residents on the other. Meanwhile, freeway proponents seemed mostly interested in how they would be affected if the freeway were constructed or not. Public attitudes about freeways in the Portland area

³⁷ Oregon State Highway Department, memorandum, August 1972, File ORG 7 Highways-Interstate, Mt. Hood Freeway, Folder 1, Oregon Department of Transportation Library, Salem, Oregon.

³⁸ Ibid.

were divisive, so freeway opponents needed more than the support of Neil Goldschmidt; they needed broad support from around the Portland metropolitan area.

By 1972, Neil Goldschmidt was not the only elected official in the Portland area speaking out against further freeway construction. Multnomah County commissioners Donald Clark and Melvin Gordon would prove invaluable to freeway opponents over the next few years. Clark had grown up in southeast Portland and had a distinct interest in urban planning.³⁹ Like other freeway opponents, Clark was concerned about urban sprawl, becoming alarmed after seeing PVMTS' 1971 transportation plan calling for numerous additional freeways in the Portland area.⁴⁰ Clark's views on freeways were supported on the commission by Melvin Gordon, who lived near Maywood Park, a northeast Portland neighborhood that had incorporated as a city in 1967 in order to prevent I-205 from destroying much of the neighborhood.⁴¹ Gordon's views on the Mount Hood Freeway and freeways in general were likely influenced by Maywood Park's struggle.⁴²

Throughout the summer of 1972, Goldschmidt and Clark continued to question the need for the Mount Hood Freeway. On August 14, Clark announced his intention to pursue a moratorium on local freeway construction, something Goldschmidt and

³⁹ Don Clark (1933-) began his public service career as Multnomah County Sheriff (1963-66). He then served on the Multnomah County Commission from 1969 to 1979. The last four years of his tenure he was the commission chair.

⁴⁰ Donald E. Clark, interview by Ernie Bonner, March 8, 2002
http://www.pdx.edu/usp/interview_dclark.html (accessed November 17, 2008).

⁴¹ Mel Gordon (1922–2007) served on the Multnomah County Commission from 1962 to 1978. Like Goldschmidt, he too was later appointed to a position in the Carter administration, serving two years on the Pacific Northwest River Basin Commission (1978-80). He later served on the board of commissioners for Clark County, Washington (1997-2004). Wade Nkrumah, "Ex-State Rep. Gordon 'a Born Optimist,'" the *Oregonian*, February 22, 2007.

⁴² Ibid.

Lloyd Anderson had already suggested. Announcing that “the time has arrived to question the continuation of freeway development,” Clark called for a halt to further freeway development in Portland once the Fremont Bridge was completed.⁴³ Taking a strong pro-environmental stance, Clark pointed out the “neighborhood obliteration, the scenery defiling, the ecological destruction, the health menace, the smog production, and the noise pollution” wrought by urban freeways.⁴⁴ He also continued to question the expenditure of “massive amounts of public resources” on urban freeways.⁴⁵ Clark even suggested that land already acquired by the state for the Mount Hood Freeway could be used to develop a mass transit corridor.⁴⁶ Local political opposition to the freeway intensified, and by fall 1972 the efforts of Clark, Gordon, Goldschmidt, and Anderson further delayed the freeway’s construction.

In the face of divided public opinion over the freeway, the Multnomah County Commission voted in November 1972 for a moratorium on freeway right-of-way acquisition for both the Mount Hood Freeway route and I-205. Sponsored by Clark and Gordon, the moratorium aimed at halting property condemnation along both routes until the scheduled completion of the required Mount Hood Freeway EIS in mid-1973. The county’s moratorium was not the only delay freeway builders faced. By late 1972, the highway department had acknowledged that a new bridge over the Willamette River was an “absolutely essential” component to the Mount Hood

⁴³ “Portland Freeway Ban Asked,” *Oregon Journal*, August 14, 1972.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Freeway.⁴⁷ Preliminary work completed by the firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill on the EIS clearly showed that the Marquam Bridge crossing would not be adequate for the expected traffic volumes if it were connected to the Mount Hood Freeway.⁴⁸ The highway department now proposed a parallel bridge to the Marquam--costing at least \$100 million--to make the Mount Hood Freeway operate efficiently.⁴⁹ Recognition that the Marquam Bridge would be inadequate further clouded the future of the freeway. Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill now had to add a study of an alternate river crossing to their voluminous EIS.

In March 1973, Goldschmidt contacted Governor McCall, expressing concern over what he called the “piecemeal planning” occurring in Portland. Goldschmidt asked the governor to create an “emergency ad hoc committee” to address the pending planning and transportation issues facing the Portland Metropolitan area.⁵⁰ The young mayor believed in the ability of local governments to solve their own land-use and transportation problems, provided that federal funds were available for such efforts. Goldschmidt pointed out to McCall that the highway and transit plans for Portland were based upon outdated 1950s-era data. Goldschmidt reasserted the notion that “the

⁴⁷ Neil Goldschmidt to O.B. Jackmond, Oregon State Highway Department, Box 4, Folder 8, Goldschmidt, Neil E., Subject Files, Mount Hood Freeway Controversy, SPARC.

⁴⁸ Traffic volume on the Mount Hood Freeway was projected to be nearly 145,000 vehicles per day by 1990. Such an increase would result in an up to 40 percent increase in traffic volume on the Marquam Bridge which in 1971 was 86,000 vehicles per day. *I-80N Environmental Study Freeway Design Alternatives, Volume 1*, II-23, II-172.

⁴⁹ Oregon State Highway Division, *I-80N Environmental Study Freeway Design Alternatives*, Parallel Marquam Bridge Supplement, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, 1973, 1.

⁵⁰ Neil Goldschmidt to Tom McCall, 23 March, 1972, Box 117, Folder 29, Neil Goldschmidt Papers, Oregon State Archives, Salem, Oregon, http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/governors/goldschmidt/box117/goldschmidt_117_029.pdf (accessed September 30, 2008).

more we build [freeways] the more we have to build.”⁵¹ To Goldschmidt, the continued focus on developing area freeways only further delayed development of a regional public mass transit system and therefore slowed the implementation of Portland’s downtown revitalization efforts.

Governor McCall agreed with Goldschmidt. On May 3, 1973, he announced formation of a Governor’s Task Force on Transportation with Goldschmidt as its chairman. The task force was given nine months to complete a review and revision of local transportation plans and make recommendations specifically about the future of the Mount Hood Freeway. The task force quickly went to work pouring over the outdated transportation plans of CRAG, PVMTS, and public transportation plans developed on behalf of Tri-Met. The assumptions stated in the 1971 PVMTS quickly became the target of criticism. The Task Force rejected PVMTS recommendations, and expressed concern over its lack of mass transit alternatives and the negative consequences of suburban sprawl.⁵² It was obvious that with Goldschmidt leading the task force, any recommendations would have to include an expansion of mass transit routes. But it was still unknown if the task force would seek a halt the Mount Hood Freeway or recommend construction of the freeway with dedicated bus lanes. It was also still possible that the task force would simply recommend that construction of the freeway be allowed to commence unabated. The work of the Governor’s Task Force continued into the fall of 1973 and beyond. Meanwhile, perhaps the most influential

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Governor’s Task Force on Transportation, *The Cooperative Transportation Planning Process in the Portland Metropolitan Area: Final Report of the Governor’s Task Force on Transportation*, System Design Concepts, 1975, 9.

piece of federal legislation to affect the Portland metropolitan area was about to be enacted.

By 1973, President Nixon had begun recommending that states and individual communities be given the right to use a designated portion of the Interstate Highway Trust Fund for developing mass transit.⁵³ Nixon reiterated his concern for environmental conditions in the U.S., sounding in many ways similar to Portland's new mayor. Nixon stated his fear that, "our children will grow up in cities which are strangled with traffic, racked by noise, and choked by pollution."⁵⁴ Nixon also felt that local governments knew best how to address their own transportation problems.⁵⁵ In a message to Congress, Nixon endorsed the use of the Interstate Highway Trust Fund for mass transit "not only to reduce urban congestion but also to reduce the concentrations of pollution that are too often the result of our present methods of transportation."⁵⁶

After months of discussion, on July 27, 1973, a special House-Senate conference committee announced it had reached an agreement phasing in the use of federal highway money for mass transit. Enacted at the height of anti-freeway activity in Portland, the 1973 Federal Aid Highway Act gave governors the ability to request a withdrawal of urban segments from the interstate system and in turn request a dollar

⁵³ Lewis, *Divided Highways*, 232.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

for dollar exchange for mass transit projects.⁵⁷ Cities where there were freeway controversies, like Portland, were therefore given the opportunity to “decide not to build a portion of their urban interstate and use the money for mass transit instead.”⁵⁸ Portland had a reformist transportation opportunity before it like never before. The ever-increasing cost of building the Mount Hood Freeway would amount to an enormous windfall. The possibilities for expanding the region’s struggling Tri-Met system were numerous. Neighborhood groups still continued to fight the freeway’s construction through whatever legal means they could muster, but by fall 1973 local and state officials were already making plans to take advantage of the new federal legislation.

Almost immediately the Mount Hood Freeway became the target for a “trade-in” of federal money. What remained was figuring out how to make such a trade-in work without losing any part of the money that had been made available in 1969 for the freeway’s construction. Goldschmidt and his staff continued their efforts to pursue this new opportunity into the fall, first trying to understand what the possibilities for a trade-in might mean for transportation in the Portland area, followed by a determination of how much money they could actually expect to receive.

By November, the mayor’s staff figured that potentially \$110 million would be available if the city chose to pursue cancellation of the Mount Hood Freeway and seek

⁵⁷ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, *A Guide to Federal-Aid Programs, Projects, and Other Uses of Highway Funds*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993, 40.

⁵⁸ Lewis, 233.

the trade-in funding.⁵⁹ Recognizing that the amount of funding for mass transit projects would be enormous under the provisions of a trade-in, it now became incumbent upon those supporting this idea to develop a list of potential mass transit projects, including transportation options other than buses. The discussion of a new mode of transportation, known as light rail, emerged as a potential method of expanding mass transit throughout the Portland area. Light rail was viewed as a less polluting, quieter, and more durable replacement for busses. Trains ran on electricity, and lines could be built along existing rail rights-of-way. Light rail was essentially an above ground subway. In working with Goldschmidt on the potential trade-in of Mount Hood Freeway funds, Mel Gordon was an early light rail proponent, optimistically suggesting that a light rail pilot project could be constructed from downtown Portland to Oregon City within 18 months. Light rail ultimately became a key component to Portland's mass transit system, but in late 1973 it was still more than a decade from reality. Nevertheless, the opportunity to trade-in money from the Mount Hood Freeway was the impetus behind discussions focused on the creation of a light rail system for Portland.

Goldschmidt and his staff knew they had a daunting if unprecedented challenge ahead of them. Not only would they need to develop a plan for what to do with trade-in money, it was also necessary to gain the support of each government body involved in the freeway decision process, starting with the City of Portland and

⁵⁹ Don Barney to Neil Goldschmidt, memorandum, 5 November 1973, Box 117, Folder 29, Goldschmidt Papers, http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/governors/goldschmidt/box117/goldschmidt_117_029.pdf (accessed 10/1/2008).

Multnomah County, extending to CRAG, Tri-Met, the Governor's Task Force, and the Governor's office. The time to seek such a trade-in was short. Participants in discussions about the possible cancellation of the Mount Hood Freeway with a trade-in for mass transit funding assumed that the 1973 Federal Aid Highway Act required that they have an entire plan prepared, approved by all parties, and ready to deliver to the Federal Highway Administration by July 1, 1974.⁶⁰ This meant there were roughly seven months to address myriad details if they hoped to succeed in their effort. Events outside of Goldschmidt's control conspired to bring a halt to the Mount Hood Freeway project however. Ultimately, the efforts of Goldschmidt and his staff to cancel the freeway would be forgotten in the course of a lawsuit. It would not be the final death knell of the long-delayed freeway, but it would be the beginning of the end.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR: TRADING IN A FREEWAY

In the fall of 1972, a grassroots organization of anti-freeway activists from southeast Portland filed a lawsuit claiming, among other things, that the route for the Mount Hood Freeway had been chosen illegally. By the end of 1973, Southeast Legal Defense was near their goal of halting the freeway's construction. Led by lawyer Charles Merten and plaintiffs Al and Kayda Clark, the pending court case threatened to bring the entire freeway project to a standstill. At the same time, without a withdrawal of support from the City of Portland, Multnomah County, and the Governor of Oregon, the freeway's construction remained a plausible scenario. Yet, as the court case was nearing completion, the possibility of trading in interstate funding for an equivalent amount that could be used toward the further development of Portland area mass transit also became a reality. By year's end Neil Goldschmidt, Don Clark, and Mel Gordon had been weighing their trade-in options for several months, but the court decision rendered in February 1974 made their pursuit of this new transportation funding opportunity easier.

By early 1974, the Mount Hood Freeway had been in development for nearly 20 years, and since 1969 had held the approval of every public agency and jurisdiction involved in the project. But by this time, the heyday of freeway construction in Portland was on the decline. The nation was in the midst of a gasoline shortage that strengthened the arguments of mass transit supporters. Public opinion in Portland was shifting toward a greater appreciation of the local environment, and this provided a new perspective on the need for additional urban freeways. By now, efforts were well

underway to close Portland's Harbor Drive, a major thoroughfare along the downtown Portland waterfront, and replace it with a new city park. The final chapter in the battle over the Mount Hood Freeway's construction was now underway.

On February 4, 1974, the U.S. District Court in Portland ruled in favor of Southeast Legal Defense that the route for the Mount Hood Freeway had been selected illegally.¹ This event set in motion the demise of the planned freeway, but it also led to an intense if short-lived effort to rejuvenate freeway plans. Grassroots opponents had stalled the freeway, but their successful lawsuit was by no means the end of the line for the Mount Hood Freeway. Without the continued anti-Mount Hood Freeway efforts of elected officials, led by a majority of the Multnomah County Commission and Portland Mayor Neil Goldschmidt, it remained possible that the freeway could be built. Because federal legislation allowing the trade-in of interstate highway construction dollars for dollars to be spent on other transportation projects was new and relatively untested, it was also still unknown how money originally designated for the Mount Hood Freeway could be made available to improve mass transit in the Portland area. Even as freeway opponents celebrated their victory in the court case, the future of the freeway and its associated funding remained in limbo.

In the Mount Hood Freeway court case, U.S. District Court Judge James Burns ruled against the Oregon State Highway Department on only one of the ten charges leveled against them by Southeast Legal Defense.² Burns agreed with Southeast Legal

¹ "New Route Hearing Ordered on Freeway", *The Oregonian*, February 5, 1974. "Hood Freeway Dealt Blow", *Oregon Journal*, February 5, 1974.

² Ibid.

Defense that the Mount Hood Freeway route had been chosen illegally because alternative routes were never in serious consideration; as early as 1965, the City of Portland had decided on a preferred route without public engagement. Burns also stated that the Oregon State Highway Department was in error because it did not publicly state its impartiality before seeking public reaction to the freeway's route. According to Burns, the hearing on the freeway's alignment that occurred in May 1969 was also illegal because it was under-publicized and unrepresentative of the affected area.³

Judge Burns ordered the highway department to hold new hearings and “un-commit” themselves to the previously selected Division-Powell route.⁴ The highway department knew that it would be difficult to organize new hearings given the outcry against the freeway, but perhaps more challenging was that they begin the route selection process anew without a preferred route. Burns’ ruling against the freeway builders was not the end of the Mount Hood Freeway, but it did encourage other freeway opponents, namely the Multnomah County Commission, to take action of its own striking another blow against the controversial freeway.

Two weeks after the ruling against the freeway route, the Multnomah County Commission acted to insure that the freeway would never be constructed. In a 3-1 vote, the county withdrew its support for the troubled freeway, noting that the route had recently been ruled invalid and declaring that “recent developments including the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973, the energy crisis, and new information about

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

social, environmental and economic impacts significantly change the assumptions under which transportation planning has so far progressed, and significantly increases the options available for public transportation.”⁵ The county also noted the impact of the proposed freeway on residents of the city, stating, “Neighborhoods directly affected by the Division-Powell alignment have suffered a loss of residential integrity in recent years, in part due to the I-80N [Mount Hood] freeway issue.”⁶

Multnomah County’s decision was not made without opposition or, for that matter, rather underhanded political tactics. First, Mike Gleason, the commission chair and a supporter of the freeway, was on vacation when the February 21 vote was taken. With Gleason out of town, that left Commissioner Dan Mosee, a small business owner from outer southeast Portland, as the lone voice on the commission favoring the freeway’s construction.⁷ Mosee immediately attempted to pursue a public vote on the freeway issue, moving that the county place a measure on the upcoming May 1974 ballot, but given Gleason’s absence, the motion was not seconded. Ben Padrow, the newest member of the county commission declared the county’s decision to rescind its 1969 approval of the freeway a major victory over the “single most powerful agency” in the state of Oregon, the Oregon State Highway Department.⁸ In a move that even in the midst of an energy crisis was very forward-thinking, the divided Multnomah County Commission resolved to “seek to implement the most socially, environmentally and economically desirable public mass transportation solutions to

⁵ Multnomah County Resolution, 21 February 1974, Box 41 Folder 18, Donald E. Clark Collection, MSS 1373, Oregon Historical Society (hereafter referred to as the Clark Collection).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Dan Mosee served two stints on the Multnomah County commission 1967-68, and 1973-80.

⁸ “Hood Freeway Plans Scuttled,” *Oregon Journal*, February 21, 1974.

these problems with full consultation with interested citizens.”⁹ It was clear that commissioners Don Clark, Ben Padrow, and Mel Gordon wanted to work with the City of Portland, CRAG, and ODOT to solve transportation problems in southeast Portland. They also made clear their eagerness to move forward in their pursuit of new mass transportation options like light rail.

Multnomah County was the first government body to formally withdraw its support for the Mount Hood Freeway. Although only a portion of the route passed through unincorporated Multnomah County (and therefore under the commission’s jurisdiction) the county wielded as much power as the City of Portland. State Highway Commission policy dating back to the mid-1960s required all jurisdictions on a proposed interstate route be in agreement before it could be constructed. If the freeway were ever to be built, either the makeup of the commission would need to change or the public would have to be given the right to vote for or against the freeway’s construction.

In their motion withdrawing support for the freeway, the Multnomah County Commission showed support for a trade-in of interstate highway funds, resolving that they would cooperate in all efforts “to take full advantage of the new opportunities for public transportation offered by the new federal legislation.”¹⁰ Mel Gordon advocated for mass transit alternatives to freeways. Two days after Multnomah County rescinded its freeway approval, Gordon spoke publicly and rather optimistically in expressing his support for a light rail pilot project he believed could be up and running within

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Multnomah County Resolution, 21 February 1974, Clark Collection.

eighteen months. Gordon also continued to chastise freeway development, calling them “spaghetti like configurations,” all the while asserting that light rail was “one of the main answers to our transportation problem.”¹¹ “We are at a crossroads,” Gordon asserted, “that’s the way we’ll go, to a rail transit system.”¹²

The county’s actions however held no guarantee that a transfer of funds would occur. Several factors remained unresolved. First, the City of Portland still officially supported the freeway and the route approved in 1969. Second, it was not immediately clear that there could be a swap of funding for other transportation projects without some sort of federal penalty. Multnomah County’s actions also upset Governor McCall who criticized the county for revoking their approval of the freeway before his task force on transportation could complete its study of Portland area transportation issues, including the Mount Hood Freeway. McCall called the actions of Multnomah County “precipitous,” raising the possibility of using the federal dollars earmarked for the Mount Hood on other highway projects in the state.¹³

Perhaps feeling pressure from Governor McCall’s office, Goldschmidt and the Portland City Council decided to hold off on any decision over the freeway’s future until after the Governor’s Task Force on Transportation had completed its survey in June 1974. Goldschmidt was in an awkward but powerful position at this point. Not only was he Portland’s mayor, he was also the head of the task force, and a primary advisor to CRAG on local planning and transportation issues. Although he was an

¹¹ “Light Rail Predicted By Autumn of ’75,” *Oregon Journal*, February 23, 1974.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ “Freeway Decision Delayed,” *Oregon Journal*, February 26, 1974.

ardent opponent of the freeway, he likely recognized how upset McCall was with Multnomah County's actions and did not want to jeopardize his own position and the governor's support.

Regardless of the city's lack of action, Mel Gordon continued to speak out about the freeway situation, declaring the issue had "caused great agony to the people living in the path of the proposed freeway."¹⁴ Gordon defended the county's decision, claiming that waiting for the task force to complete its work had little effect on the freeway's outcome, because it was only an advisory body to the state on transportation issues. Gordon argued that Multnomah County's actions had actually made it easier for the task force to look at alternatives to the freeway.¹⁵ Gordon was correct in this assertion. Without the approval of the Multnomah County, the project could not move forward. Gordon, Don Clark and Ben Padrow all favored an alternative to the freeway. They also believed that there was a firm deadline of June 1, 1974, required by the federal government for any request to trade-in interstate funds for use on other transportation projects.

Gordon and his two allies on the commission possibly did not understand clearly or perhaps refused to acknowledge, that the looming June 1 deadline was not a fixed date. This deadline, outlined in the 1973 Federal Aid Highway Act, was merely the date by which states considering alternatives to the completion of any portion of their interstate system were required to respond to the Federal Highway

¹⁴ Public Statement of Melvin L. Gordon, 26 February 1974, Box 3 Folder 12, Melvin L. Gordon Collection, MSS 2525, Oregon Historical Society.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Administration about their intentions. Gordon insisted that, because of recent events, “there was no realistic chance it [the Mount Hood Freeway] will ever be built.”¹⁶ In response to Gordon’s comments, county commissioner Dan Mosee continued to assert that the freeway would be built, and that Gordon’s comments about its future were “a bald faced lie.”¹⁷ Over the next several months, public discussion about the freeway reached a fevered pitch, but the power to build or not build the freeway remained in the hands of an elected or appointed few.

Multnomah County’s withdrawal of support for the freeway was met with divided public opinion. Many residents were happy, expressing hope that the freeway would not be constructed, sparing homes and businesses in the freeway’s path. Others wanted the city, state, and county to focus on improving existing streets in southeast Portland.¹⁸ Many living in the proposed freeway’s path expressed disappointment ranging from those pro-freeway advocates who viewed the freeway as the only or best solution for traffic problems confronting southeast Portland to those such as Margaret Eide, who lived in the freeway’s path yet still wished it would be constructed. When interviewed by the *Oregon Journal*, Eide noted that she wanted the freeway to be built not because she believed in the benefits of freeways as a transportation mode but rather because she was irritated from having “lived under the shadow” of the proposed freeway for a decade.¹⁹ According to Eide, freeway planning had ruined her

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ “Fur Flies at Courthouse,” *Oregon Journal*, February 27, 1974

¹⁸ Watford Reed, “Most SE Residents Applaud ‘Scuttling’ of Hood Freeway,” *Oregon Journal*, February 23, 1974.

¹⁹ Ibid.

neighborhood, leaving run-down houses that invited vandalism. Eide also noted that “having gone this far, they should have gone ahead (with the freeway) long ago.”²⁰

Public opinion remained divided, playing out in letters to the editor in local newspapers as well as letters sent to the elected officials involved in the freeway controversy. Some proponents of the freeway were critical of Multnomah County for withdrawing its support, pointing out the amount of time and money that had already gone into the freeway’s development.²¹ Freeway opponents, on the other hand, maintained that those living in the proposed freeway’s path had been stuck “in limbo” for years and asked for a resolution on the matter that included a mass transit system of “equal benefit” to all residents in the Portland metropolitan area.²² Interestingly, among residents on both sides of the freeway issue, the same reasons were sometimes cited but opposing conclusions often reached. Those commenting in support of the freeway frequently pointed out the impact such a long and drawn-out process had on the neighborhoods in the freeway’s path, but they concluded that these neighborhoods had become expendable because of their poor condition. Freeway opponents reached a completely different conclusion, noting that people were holding off on house repairs and yard maintenance because they perceived the devaluation of their property and that there was little recourse or reason to maintain their homes until the freeway situation was resolved.²³

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Richard Cordoza to Multnomah County Commission, 28 February 1974, Box 41 Folder 18, Clark Collection.

²² Elizabeth Joseph to Tom McCall, 28 February 1974, Box 41 Folder 18, Clark Collection.

²³ Watford Reed, “Most SE Residents Applaud ‘Scuttling’ of Hood Freeway”, *Oregon Journal*, February 23, 1974.

Although dismayed by what he believed was a premature action by Multnomah County, Oregon Governor Tom McCall was not necessarily a freeway advocate. Throughout the process he had supported citizen involvement even from those opposed to the freeway.²⁴ McCall was also supportive of efforts aimed at improving Portland area mass transit. Less than a week after Judge Burns ruled on the freeway, the governor asked for the resignation of the entire seven member board of directors for Tri-Met, stating that he didn't feel the board was developing Portland area mass transit fast enough. According to McCall, increasing the availability of mass transit in the Portland area was especially important given that the entire United States was still in the midst of a gasoline shortage.²⁵ Showing further support for citizen activists, McCall subsequently appointed a member of STOP to the Tri-Met board, thereby giving the activist organization credibility for its outspoken attacks on the Mount Hood and other freeways in the Portland area.

On the same day McCall named his new Tri-Met board, the Portland City Council took up the issue of the Mount Hood Freeway, electing to postpone, for several weeks, any consideration of the diversion of interstate highway money toward mass transit.²⁶ Citizens speaking at the hearing were divided over the freeway, but by this time, it had become clear that anti-freeway civic groups were more organized than the freeway supporters, and they also had more overt official support from the likes of Goldschmidt, Don Clark, and Mel Gordon. Groups ranging from those interested in

²⁴ Oregon State Highway Division, *Mt. Hood Freeway Forum* 5, 1973.

²⁵ Richard Colby, "Resignations Asked, Received, Board of Tri-Met to be Replaced", *The Oregonian*, February 13, 1974.

²⁶ "City Delays Mt. Hood Freeway Decision," *The Oregonian*, February 27, 1974.

halting freeway construction and maintaining affordable housing, such as STOP, to burgeoning neighborhood associations, such as the Richmond and Hosford-Abernethy neighborhoods that lay directly in the proposed freeway's path, were growing in power and authority. Under Goldschmidt's guidance, the City of Portland had recently created the Office of Neighborhood Associations, creating a direct line of communication between recognized neighborhood groups and all city bureaus.²⁷ Meanwhile, freeway supporters remained weak, with little support from city council other than Frank Ivancie. In many ways freeway advocates in 1974, had reversed roles with anti-freeway advocates who had held little power only a few years earlier.

In March 1974, Lloyd Anderson, announced his resignation from city council, to become the new executive director of the Port of Portland.²⁸ His replacement, Charles Jordan, had a citizen activist background and support from Goldschmidt, which enhanced the Mayor's ability to continue with his anti-freeway activity.²⁹ The city council's decision on the freeway was still months away, but before he left office, Anderson helped clarify the status of the route, announcing that the June 1, 1974, deadline did not require a final decision on how trade-in money would be used.³⁰ After conversing with federal officials, Anderson reported that it was only a date by which the state was required to express its intentions, either moving forward with the freeway project or seeking a transfer of funds for mass transit or other projects. This

²⁷ Abbott, *Portland: Planning, Politics, and Growth*, 200.

²⁸ Lansing, *Portland: People, Politics, and Power*, 402.

²⁹ Charles Jordan was the first African-American to serve on the Portland City Council (1974-1984). Prior to his appointment as Lloyd Anderson's replacement, Jordan had been the director of Portland's Model Cities program. Lansing, 402.

³⁰ "Freeway Deadline Not Final", *Oregon Journal*, Mar 13, 1974.

news from Anderson relieved some of the political pressure on city council to follow Multnomah County's lead.

The realization that June 1, 1974, was not a firm deadline for deciding the future of Mount Hood Freeway funds led to further criticism of the Multnomah County Commission for revoking its approval of the freeway without clearly understanding how the trade-in opportunity would function. The *Oregonian* referred to Multnomah County's actions as a political "hip shot," while complimenting Portland City Council for agreeing to wait until the Governor's task force completed its work before revisiting the freeway issue.³¹ It is unclear if Goldschmidt had the support necessary among his fellow council members at the time to withdraw support as the county had done, which may explain the decision to table the freeway issue until the summer of 1974. At the same time, it was not necessary that the City follow immediately in the footsteps of Multnomah County. Without the support of the county, the freeway could not be constructed. Even if they reversed course once more and came out in support of the freeway, there was still the February court ruling that would have to be addressed. Heading into the summer of 1974, the freeway controversy continued to simmer.

With the Mount Hood Freeway in limbo as the city waited for the Governor's Task Force to finalize its study, advocates for the freeway stepped up efforts to raise support for the freeway. In June, a group of neighbors who lived near the route of the freeway and called themselves the "Save the Mt. Hood Freeway Committee"

³¹ Editorial, *The Oregonian*, March 16, 1974

conducted a “poll” of residents and business owners in the Portland area, asking a single question: “Do you favor the building of the Mt. Hood Freeway, with six lanes for vehicle traffic and two lanes for mass transit?”³² In correspondence with Commissioner Clark, the Committee attempted to show broad support for the freeway from hundreds of individuals, families, and businesses. But they neglected to show the numbers of those opposed to the route in the results of their survey.³³ A more formal poll, commissioned by the *Oregonian*, showed freeway proponents outnumbering opponents by a margin of two to one.³⁴ For most of the next year, the *Oregonian*’s publisher, Robert Notson, and editor, Herbert Lundy, used the results of this poll in their repeated arguments in support for a freeway and a public vote on the matter. The issue remained divisive as the Governor’s task force released its preliminary findings in April and the Portland City Council prepared to address its position on the freeway in late July.

Throughout the first half of 1974, the Governor’s Task Force on Transportation issued piecemeal recommendations on the transportation problems facing the Portland area. In January, the task force had begun questioning the need for the Mount Hood Freeway, in part because of the lack of attention given to the potential expansion of mass transit in the region.³⁵ They were highly critical of the 1971 regional transportation plan for 1990 adopted by CRAG because it ignored the possibility of expanding area mass transit through Tri-Met. By April, they were

³² Harvey Isaacs to Don Clark, 5 June 1974, Box 41, Folder 18, Clark Collection.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ “Poll Indicates SE Freeway Favored 2-1”, *The Oregonian*, July 24, 1974.

³⁵ “Task Force Opposes Mt. Hood Freeway Idea”, *The Oregonian*, January 30, 1974.

looking at potential routes for an expanded mass transit system that included rail transit.³⁶ The Task Force also expressed concern that continued expansion of the local freeway network encouraged suburban sprawl by making it easier, albeit temporarily, for people to live further away yet still commute into downtown. They believed the net result would be demand for additional freeways beyond those already planned.

Although the final report of the Task Force would not be released until January 1975, a majority of their positions were well known and understood by the summer of 1974, just as the Portland City Council began to move forward with deliberations on the Mount Hood Freeway.

In preparation for deliberations over the freeway, Mayor Goldschmidt and his staff worked to devise a strategy that would bring about an end to the freeway. It was likely that if they withdrew support for the freeway, a ballot measure would be proposed at both city and county levels, giving voters the opportunity to weigh in on the freeway issue. A poll conducted by the Mayor's office showed a more even split—43% favored the freeway, 34% opposed it, and 23% remained unsure—than the poll conducted on behalf of the *Oregonian*. Nonetheless, a significant majority of respondents favored the freeway's construction. In order to block the freeway, Goldschmidt had to determine how to prevent a public vote. First, he needed to convince a majority of his city council to withdraw its support for the Mount Hood Freeway.

³⁶ "Task Force Studies Transit Routes", *The Oregonian*, April 26, 1974.

For three days, July 23 to 25, 1974, the Portland City Council held hearings about the Mount Hood Freeway. In opposing the freeway, Goldschmidt had early support from Charles Jordan, but he needed at least one additional commissioner on his side to gain a majority. With Frank Ivancie staunchly supporting the freeway, Goldschmidt had to convince either Connie McCready or Mildred Schwab that the freeway was no longer a viable transportation option and that seeking a trade-in of interstate funds presented the best solution to Portland's transportation problems.³⁷ Both McCready and Schwab were at first uncommitted and asked numerous questions during the hearings. Schwab, known as a stickler on financial matters, questioned the effect on tax revenue in Portland if the freeway were constructed and so many housing units lost.³⁸ McCready expressed similar concern over the loss of housing, but she focused on the amount of low-income housing that would be lost as opposed to lost tax revenue. Goldschmidt contended that it would be impossible to offset the housing loss, and he bolstered his opposition to the freeway by pointing out that transportation studies had shown that the freeway would not be able to handle expected traffic volumes and that it would benefit mostly residents outside the city.³⁹ Goldschmidt gained not only the support of Commissioner Jordan, but also those of McCready and

³⁷ Mildred Schwab (1917-1999) replaced Goldschmidt on the city council when he became mayor. She served on the council from 1973-1986. Spencer Heinz, "City Icon Mildred Schwab Dies" the *Oregonian*, January 14, 1999.

³⁸ U.S. Department of Transportation, *Improving Communication Among Researchers, Professionals and Policy Makers in Land Use and Transportation Planning*, DOT-TPI-77-10-12, March 1977, 76.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

Schwab, who called the freeway “a dead issue.” On July 25, 1974, in a vote of 4-1, the Portland City Council formally withdrew its support for the Mount Hood Freeway.⁴⁰

Like Multnomah County commissioner Dan Mosee, who earlier in the year had been the lone voice from the county commission in support of the freeway, Frank Ivancie, now proposed that the city authorize a ballot measure for voters to decide the freeway’s fate. As in Mosee’s effort however, Ivancie’s request was similarly voted down by a majority of city council.⁴¹ Now, if the freeway were to ever be constructed, not only would the route selection process have to be revisited, it would also require both the city and the county to change its mind and once more approve the freeway, a highly unlikely scenario.

Immediately after the city’s decision to revoke its approval of the freeway, a new organization, The Committee to Build the Mt. Hood, was organized with the expressed goal of securing a local ballot initiative to allow voters to decide the freeway’s fate. The committee, led by the Portland Chamber of Commerce and the Multnomah County Labor Council, believed that such an initiative would have greater authority than any “advisory” vote performed at the city or county level.⁴² In support of the committee’s actions, Commissioner Ivancie took a page from freeway opponents’ arguments, referring to the pro-freeway movement as “a grass root effort” that reflected “citizen participation at the finest level.”⁴³ In an era of distrust of government, Ivancie and the Committee to Build the Mt. Hood sought to show that

⁴⁰ “Vote on Freeway Ends 3-Day Discussion”, *The Oregonian*, July 26, 1974.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² “SE Freeway Backers Continue Fight for Ballot Initiative in Fall”, *The Oregonian*, August 6, 1974.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

both a majority of city council and the Multnomah County Commission had refused to act on the will of a majority of area residents. While efforts to obtain a vote on the freeway continued, Multnomah County, CRAG, and ultimately Governor McCall took additional measures that made it highly unlikely the freeway would ever be revived.

On August 15, the Multnomah County Commission met again to address two issues regarding the freeway. First, they formally rejected attempts to have the freeway issue placed before voters. Once again, the proposal before the county was spearheaded by Dan Mosee. While Mosee was in the minority on the county commission, he did have vocal support at the hearing from representatives of the Committee to Build the Mt. Hood, the Gresham Chamber of Commerce, and the Portland Board of Realtors.⁴⁴ After the hearing, Mosee insisted he would keep trying to get the freeway on the ballot, perhaps by May 1976.⁴⁵

The second action taken by the commission was a reaffirmation of their withdrawal of support for the freeway, this time specifically requesting that the funds for the doomed interstate be traded-in for those that could be used for an expansion of Portland area mass transit.⁴⁶ The county's action, in conjunction with the July decision from the Portland City Council, left it up to the board of directors of CRAG to make a final recommendation on the freeway funding to Governor McCall. With both Portland and Multnomah County formally requesting the "trade-in" of Mount Hood Freeway money for mass transit funding, CRAG wasted little time in following suit.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ "Commission Rejects Vote on Freeway", *The Oregonian*, August 16, 1974.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Now, the future of the Mount Hood Freeway seemingly rested in the hands of Governor McCall. Interestingly, McCall did not take quick action on the matter but instead he waited until after the November elections.

In late November 1974, outgoing Governor McCall notified the head of the Federal Highway Administration, Norbert Tiemann, and U.S. Secretary of Transportation, Claude S. Brinegar, that he concurred with the recommendations of CRAG, the City of Portland, Multnomah County, and his own task force on transportation that the Mount Hood Freeway be removed from the federal interstate system.⁴⁸ McCall's communication with the highway administration was still not a formal application for withdrawal. The popular yet term-limited governor elected to leave that maneuver up to his successor, Democrat Robert Straub, who during his campaign for governor had acknowledged his opposition to the freeway's construction.⁴⁹ While it may have seemed that McCall's actions sealed the fate of the freeway, his maneuver left open a window of opportunity for pro-freeway forces to qualify a ballot initiative requiring a public vote on the issue.⁵⁰ The *Oregonian* meanwhile, expressed support for a petition drive for what they were now calling the Mount Hood Freeway-Transitway project, in an attempt to show that the freeway if constructed would also contain dedicated bus lanes.⁵¹ At the end of 1974, there was

⁴⁸ Tom McCall to Claude S. Brinegar, 26 November 1974, Box 117, Folder 2, Goldschmidt Papers, http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/governors/goldschmidt/box117/goldschmidt_117_002.pdf (accessed September 29, 2008).

⁴⁹ Tom McCall to Norbert Tiemann, 26 November 1974, Box 117, Folder 2, Goldschmidt Papers, http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/governors/goldschmidt/box117/goldschmidt_117_002.pdf (accessed September 29, 2008).

⁵⁰ Tom McCall, letter to the editor, *The Oregonian*, December 5, 1974.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

still hope among many freeway supporters that the Mount Hood Freeway could be revived in the coming year.

Several months passed with publicly little new Mount Hood Freeway activity. Behind the scenes Goldschmidt and his staff worked to develop a list of potential transportation projects for Governor Straub to consider should he go forward with the interstate trade-in request. The final decision on the freeway lay in the hands of the new governor and all assumed he would make the request to the Federal Highway Administration. Freeway proponents, for their part, continued their pursuit of a vote on the freeway issue. On May 19, 1975, thousands of signatures were delivered to the Portland City Auditor, George Yerkovich, on behalf of the Committee to Build the Mt. Hood. Frank Ivancie declared the event “a proud day for the citizens of Portland.”⁵² Mayor Goldschmidt continued to speak out against the idea of a public vote on the freeway, declaring in a news conference later that same day that any vote on the freeway would not be binding. Although he continued to challenge a freeway vote, Goldschmidt had reasons to be concerned about a public vote. Mildred Schwab was already acknowledging that if there were a tremendous outpouring of support to build the freeway, she would reconsider her position on the issue.⁵³ If she did, Goldschmidt knew he ran the risk of losing his city council majority on the issue. Time and additional legal rulings soon played out in Goldschmidt’s favor.

While the city auditor busily worked to count all of the signatures and get them certified, local environmental, neighborhood, and even anti-freeway labor groups filed

⁵² Huntly Collins, “Freeway Petitions Given to City”, *The Oregonian*, May 20, 1975.

⁵³ Ibid.

suit in Multnomah County Circuit Court to block signature certification, citing that the petition in question was an illegal use of Oregon's initiative process. This argument was supported by Goldschmidt and bolstered by the Portland City Attorney, John W. Osburn, who pointed out that any resolution by the city for or against the freeway's construction was merely advisory and did not actually authorize construction.⁵⁴ Therefore, even if a vote was held and a majority of Portlanders voted in favor of the freeway, it still would not force the highway department to build the freeway, nor would it provide the funding to do so.⁵⁵ At the end of June, several organizations, including the Oregon Environmental Council and the Amalgamated Transit Union, representing Tri-Met's bus drivers, filed suit in order to block certification of the signatures submitted to the city auditor requesting a vote on the freeway.⁵⁶ Although there were an estimated 40,000 signatures favoring a freeway vote, their status was now in limbo. Time however was growing short for freeway advocates. With a looming deadline to request or—as McCall had earlier suggested—withdraw the Mount Hood Freeway from the interstate highway system, Governor Straub took control of the issue.

Stating there was “clear evidence that the [Mount Hood] freeway cannot be constructed within the foreseeable future, if ever,” on July 1, 1975, Governor Straub formally requested the withdrawal of the Mount Hood Freeway from the interstate

⁵⁴ John W. Osburn to Neil Goldschmidt, 7 October 1974, Goldschmidt Papers, http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/governors/goldschmidt/box117/goldschmidt_117_002.pdf (accessed September 29, 2008).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ “Suit Asks No Certification of Freeway-Vote Signatures”, *The Oregonian*, June 28, 1975.

system.⁵⁷ In a lengthy letter to U.S. Secretary of Transportation William T. Coleman, Straub pointed out the numerous obstacles facing the freeway and the need to move forward with a broad transportation plan in the Portland area that included an expansion of the area's mass transit infrastructure. To that end, Straub included the request that the money set aside for the freeway be transferred to several mass transit related projects in the Portland area. Straub's request included dedicated "busways" to parallel the existing Banfield Freeway in northeast Portland and the Sunset Highway on Portland's west side. Moreover, Straub requested that all funds that remained once the busways were completed be made available for alternative mass transit projects.⁵⁸ In this way Straub opened the door for future funding of light rail in the Portland area, although at the time he did not explicitly request money for any rail projects.

Following Straub's announcement of his request to the Federal Highway Administration, Mayor Goldschmidt publicly acknowledged his thanks to the governor for taking such a strong stance and finally bringing the battle over the freeway to an end.⁵⁹ Don Clark, now the Chairman of the Multnomah County Commission, similarly praised Straub for his actions, calling them "courageous and far-sighted."⁶⁰ While Goldschmidt and Straub agreed that the proposed alternatives to the freeway would create jobs just as freeway construction would, heavy criticism of

⁵⁷ Robert Straub to William T. Coleman, 1 July 1975, Box 117, Folder 1, Goldschmidt Papers, http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/governors/goldschmidt/box117/goldschmidt_117_001.pdf (accessed September 29, 2008).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Neil Goldschmidt, Statement on the Mt. Hood Freeway Withdrawal, 1 July 1975, Box 116, Folder 39, Goldschmidt Papers, http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/governors/goldschmidt/box116/goldschmidt_116_039.pdf 9 (accessed September 29, 2008).

⁶⁰ Wally Marchbank, "Straub Praised, Damned for Action on Mt. Hood Freeway", *The Oregonian*, July 2, 1975.

the Governor's trade-in request continued to pour in from the Multnomah County Labor Council, whose chairman, John Wilson, called the Governor's actions the "worst thing since Watergate."⁶¹ The organized proponents of the freeway began to weaken. The Portland Chamber of Commerce, Wilson's ally as part of the Committee to Build the Mt. Hood, began to waver on its pro-freeway position, declaring their desire to "cooperate in efforts to solve transportation problems."⁶² If the federal government concurred with Governor Straub's request, which was likely but not guaranteed, there would be little anyone could do to revive the Mount Hood Freeway.

Even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, Commissioner Ivancie continued his pursuit of a public vote on the freeway issue. Days after Straub submitted his request to the federal government, Ivancie attempted to persuade city council to ask the governor to rescind his request for the transfer of Mount Hood Freeway funds. Once again, Ivancie was voted down by a margin of four to one.⁶³ Attempts by Ivancie to garner the support of Portland area Congressman Robert Duncan, also proved to be fruitless. Duncan wasted little time siding with Straub's decision, even though he personally favored the Mount Hood Freeway's construction.⁶⁴

In a last-ditch effort to revive the defunct freeway, the Committee to Build the Mount Hood took legal action of its own. In August, 1975, the Committee filed a legal suit asking that city and state officials be barred from interfering with a public vote on

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Huntly Collins, "City Rejects Ivancie Freeway Appeal", *The Oregonian*, July 18, 1975.

⁶⁴ "Ivancie Presses for Freeway Help", *The Oregonian*, July 8, 1975.

the freeway issue. By now, more than 20,000 petition signatures had been verified, enough to have the freeway initiative placed on an upcoming ballot, should the city change its position and allow a vote.⁶⁵ A decision by city council became moot however, because the following month Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge Clifford B. Olson ruled in favor of the suit filed in June by the Oregon Environmental Council and the Amalgamated Transit Union. In a decision rendered without trial and agreed upon by both sides, Olson sided with Portland City Attorney Osburn that any vote on the freeway would have been an “unlawful use of initiative power.”⁶⁶ The state constitution required initiative petitions to be designed to create legislation, if passed. Olson ruled that a vote on the freeway was aimed at overturning the City’s revocation of approval for the freeway, not at creating any legislation as required. The Mount Hood Freeway was dead. Much to the dismay of Ivancie and his pro-freeway supporters, there was no way to reverse the Governor’s actions.

In May 1976, Straub received final approval from the Federal Highway Administration for the deletion of the Mount Hood Freeway from the interstate system and authorization for substituting those funds with funding for a series of transportation projects broadly outlined in his July 1975 letter to the FHA. A large portion of funds were to be directed toward the creation of a light rail line in Portland, but other road projects were also granted funding from an inflation adjusted pool of freeway funds that by mid-1976, was estimated at over \$200 million. The freeway’s

⁶⁵ “Pro-Freeway Group Brings Legal Action”, *The Oregonian*, August 12, 1975.

⁶⁶ “Judge Removes Chance to Vote on Hood Freeway”, *The Oregonian*, September 20, 1975.

cancellation also meant that the highway department had more than \$7 million worth of right-of-way property acquired since 1969, which by state law had to be sold.

Although never constructed, the freeway left a permanent mark on Portland. Not only did the controversy over this roadway usher in a new era of pro-environmental land use and transportation planning in Portland, but the money once targeted for the freeway also helped jumpstart several transportation projects around the area, and the sell-off of right-of-way land helped several long-neglected southeast Portland neighborhoods re-establish themselves as livable communities.

CONCLUSION

The abandonment of the Mount Hood Freeway in 1976 occurred during a period of growing concern for the environment and rising civic activism. But stopping the freeway required more than just organized opposition. In order for anti-freeway activists to succeed, they required the support of elected officials and legislation that provided an opportunity to reevaluate Portland area transportation needs. Nevertheless, the freeway's cancellation and subsequent expansion of the local mass transit system did not lead to a complete paradigm shift in how people moved about the city. Just as they do in cities around the globe, automobiles continue to dominate the Portland streetscape. The cancellation of the Mount Hood Freeway therefore did little to reduce what Frank Ivancie referred to as "the American love-affair with the automobile."¹ But while the automobile is still the primary method in which people move about the Portland area, the impact of stopping the Mount Hood Freeway cannot be doubted. In fact, although it was never constructed, the freeway project has had a major impact upon the Portland metropolitan area.

With the cancellation of the Mount Hood Freeway, the highway department was forced to sell off the property it had acquired for the project. In 1976, of the 415 parcels in the Mount Hood Freeway corridor owned by the highway department, nearly half of them had been cleared of all buildings through demolition or building relocation. State law required the highway department to auction off surplus property

¹ Steve Jennings, "Ivancie Urges Freeway Revival," *The Oregonian*, March 29, 1979.

valued at more than \$1,000.² In 1978, the highway department began auctioning off the remaining houses and other buildings once occupying freeway right-of-way. To prevent land speculation, winning bidders were required to live in the auctioned homes for at least one year after their purchase.³ Over the course of the next decade most of the right-of-way property was returned to private ownership, while some was put to public use.

Although it was never constructed, Portlanders have lived in the shadow of the Mount Hood Freeway for more than 40 years. Completed in 1966, the Marquam Bridge contains stubs designed to connect the route with Interstate 5 at the Willamette River. The more than \$7 million spent on right-of-way for the freeway also left its mark upon the neighborhoods through which the freeway would have passed. The first indication that something in these inner southeast Portland neighborhoods occurred can be seen if one travels the old freeway route from 12th and 50th avenues between Division and Clinton streets. Housing in these neighborhoods was predominately built prior to the Second World War, so the presence of housing units built after 1980 is today an indication that the original homes were either demolished or moved to make way for the freeway's construction. At 27th Avenue, the presence of a half-acre park in the midst of an otherwise closely built residential neighborhood is another subtle-yet certain impact from the un-built freeway. Piccolo Park, named after long-time residents who lived in one of the homes where the park is now located, became a city

² Jo Mancuso, "Freeway Land Disposal Grinds Along", *The Oregonian*, October 6, 1976.

³ Early Deane, "First 'Freeway' House Auctioned Off For \$38,000", *The Oregonian*, April 14, 1978.

park in 1989 after the City of Portland acquired the land from the Oregon Department of Transportation.

There are also signs of the freeway's impact farther east along the one-time route. Powell Boulevard was significantly modified after the freeway's cancellation. Today, between 52nd and 82nd avenues there are numerous parking lots along the south side of Powell – on land once purchased for freeway right-of-way. These lots were designed to encourage commuters to leave their cars and use mass transit as they made their way into the city center. East of 82nd Avenue, the State of Oregon has also made use of land once purchased for the freeway. A branch of the State Department of Motor Vehicles occupies once such site at 87th Avenue and at 92nd Avenue the Oregon Department of Transportation put Barlow Grade School to use by housing several state offices. The building would have been demolished had the freeway been constructed. Just east of this location is I-205, completed in the 1980s. Near the intersection of Powell Boulevard and I-205 there would have been a major freeway interchange had the Mount Hood Freeway been constructed. Hundreds of houses in this area were demolished to make way for both freeways. Today, Tri-Met has a major bus maintenance facility on part of this land, just east of I-205. A few blocks farther east, at Powell and 100th avenue is the nearly 13 acre Ed Benedict Park. In 1986, the City of Portland acquired the property which had been cleared by the highway department to make way for the Mount Hood Freeway.

The Mount Hood Freeway trade-in process led to more than a decade of dispersals for myriad transportation projects. By the early 1980s, the \$110 million

once set aside for the Mount Hood Freeway had grown to nearly \$300 million.⁴ The monumental increase occurred because the federal government adjusted the pool of Mount Hood Freeway money for inflation. In 1979-1980, just as projects using Mount Hood Freeway money were being identified, inflation in the U.S. was also averaging nearly 13 percent.⁵ The large sum of money made available from the trade-in helped fund projects that may have otherwise languished. While a large portion of the projects developed using Mount Hood Freeway involved mass transit, many of them did not.

Of all the projects owing their completion -at least in part- to funds once earmarked for the Mount Hood Freeway, none was more costly or has received more accolades than the creation of Portland's first light rail line. Completed in 1986 at the cost of \$214 million, the 15-mile long east side Metropolitan Area Express (MAX) line connects downtown Portland with Gresham's city center. The project received 83 percent of its funding from a pool that included money once allocated for the Mount Hood Freeway. An interesting and important detail in the story of Portland's first MAX line is that it runs adjacent to the Banfield Freeway for approximately six of its fifteen-mile length. The MAX line therefore does not provide a mass transit alternative for residents living in the Mount Hood Freeway corridor. Development of this MAX line did nothing to address what for decades had been recognized as an important transportation "desire line" for commuters and southeast Portland residents alike. But

⁴ Michael Alesko, "\$22 Million Allocation Drains Hood Road Fund", *The Oregonian*, March 1, 1980.

⁵ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Consumer Price Index History Table 1913 to Present*, <ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/cpi/cpiiai.txt> (accessed December 27, 2008).

neither did its construction require the wholesale demolition of residential Portland neighborhoods.

At the same time the first MAX line was being developed, a significant upgrade to the Banfield Freeway was also completed with a portion of its funding coming from Mount Hood Freeway money. The very route that was determined in 1969 to be insufficient as an interstate leading to the emergence of the Mount Hood Freeway as I-80N, was upgraded in the first half of the 1980s at a cost of more than \$100 million. Upgrades to the Banfield included widening the route from four to six lanes and access ramp improvements. Although the route never regained interstate status, the Banfield improvement project flew in the face of anti-freeway activists and urban planners who during the battle over the Mount Hood Freeway asserted that adding lanes to roadways only led to increased traffic on such roads.

By 1980, the Banfield and MAX projects were underway, but a lengthy list of more than three dozen smaller transportation projects using Mount Hood Freeway funds had also been identified.⁶ To the south of Portland, the Oregon Highway 213 bypass project in Oregon City used Mount Hood Freeway money, as did upgrade projects for McLoughlin Boulevard between Portland and Oregon City and Oregon Highway 43, passing through downtown Lake Oswego. West of Portland, improvement projects for Oregon Highway 217 along with a 300 space park and ride lot in Tigard received Mount Hood Freeway funds. In Beaverton, Canyon Road, Farmington Road, and Allen Boulevard were all widened with a portion of their

⁶ “Freeway Funds Go Elsewhere”, *The Oregonian*, January 14, 1979.

funding coming from the cancelled freeway. As with the widening of the Banfield, these projects did little to hinder or diminish the use of the automobile in the Portland area.

Of course projects in the city of Portland also received money from the Mount Hood Freeway pool. A \$10 million freeway interchange from I-5 to Greeley Avenue in north Portland, was slated to receive Mount Hood funds, but instead that money was re-allocated for improvement projects to Northeast Union Avenue (Now Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard), Southwest Macadam Avenue, and Southeast Powell Boulevard. The reallocation of the I-5/Greeley Avenue interchange money came in 1980, after the federal government granted the city separate funding to complete the project.⁷ The person who approved the federal grant, enabling the city to complete the freeway interchange was none other than one-time freeway opponent Neil Goldschmidt, who in 1979 had been appointed Secretary of Transportation by President Jimmy Carter. 15 years after the freeway was canceled the last remaining projects using Mount Hood Freeway funds were completed. The final \$6.6 million was used to upgrade Marine Drive and Airport Way in Northeast Portland, as well as the approaches to the Hawthorne Bridge over the Willamette River.⁸

In 1999 and again in 2005, Bob Young, a writer for the *Willamette Week* newspaper declared “If there was one event that has defined Portland in the last 25 years, it was killing the Mount Hood Freeway.”⁹ Today Tri-Met claims that the

⁷ Alesko, “\$22 Million Allocation Drains Hood Road Fund”.

⁸ Alan K. Ota, “President Ok’s \$26 Million for Westside Light-Rail Work”, *The Oregonian*, October 30, 1991.

⁹ Bob Young, “Highway to Hell,” *Willamette Week*, March 5, 2005.

development of the MAX system beginning in the 1970s “marked a pivotal point in Portland’s history, as the region broke away from automobile-focused urban design to become a civic innovator in land use and transportation.”¹⁰ The assertions of Tri-Met and Bob Young may both be somewhat true, but while the cancellation of the Mount Hood Freeway and the development of Portland’s first MAX line encouraged the use of other transportation modes, little was done to remove automobiles from most local roadways, particularly in the Mount Hood Freeway corridor. In this respect, the Mount Hood Freeway story is less about transportation and more about a period of time in which Portland residents began to see value in the older portions of their city. Many of these areas were lost to freeway development and urban renewal but the battle over the Mount Hood Freeway remains a benchmark, deservedly so, for the preservation of Portland’s older east side neighborhoods.

¹⁰ Tri-County Metropolitan Transit District of Oregon, *Eastside MAX Blue Line Project Fact Sheet*, <http://www.trimet.org/pdfs/history/railfactsheet-banfield.pdf> (accessed January 4, 2009).

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